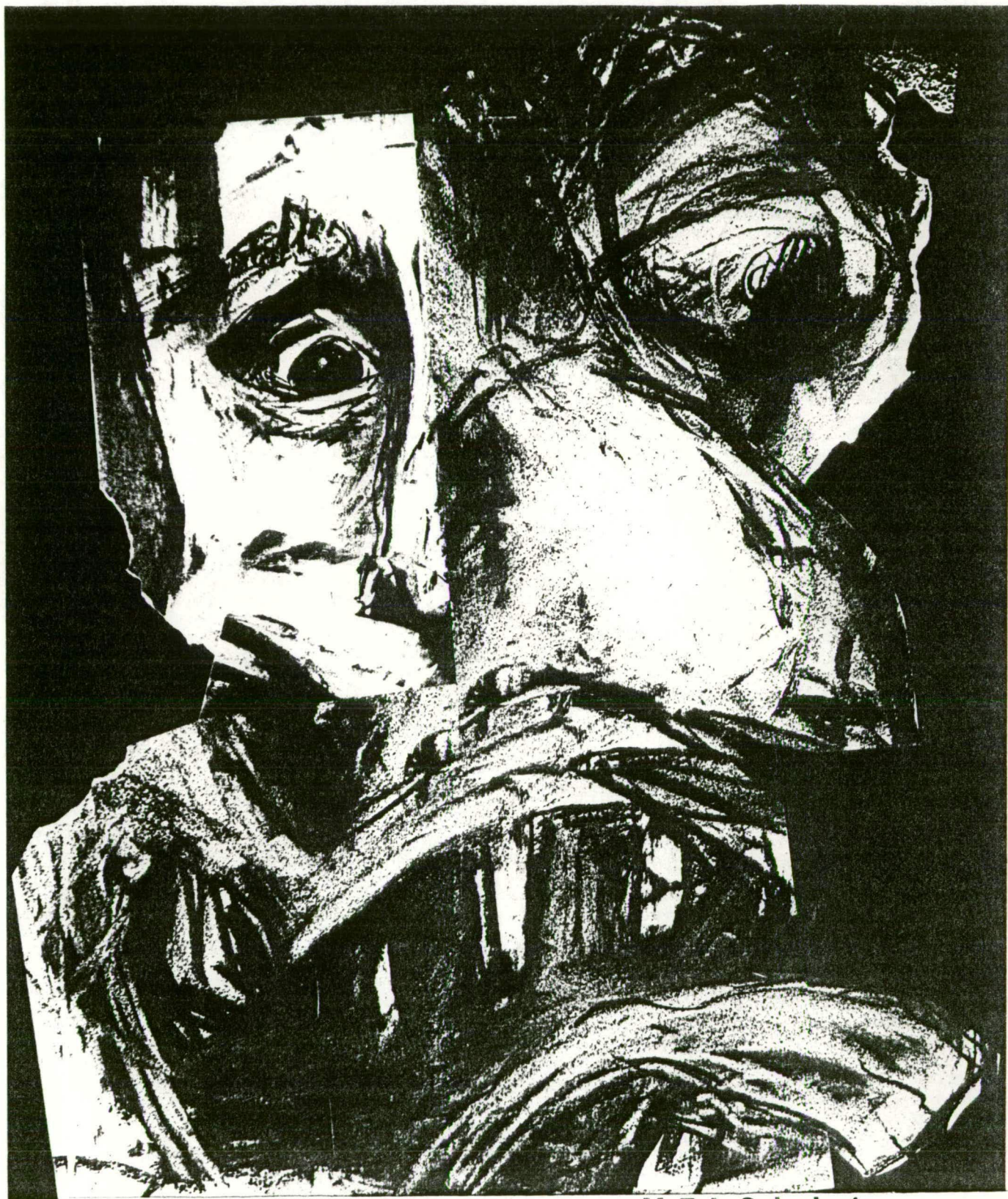


# IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION



M. F. A. Submission

PAINTINGS

by Anne Bennett



"We brandish the threat of the monstrous so as to reinforce the ideology of good and evil, of things that are permitted and prohibited."

[Michel Foucault 1971].

We make-believe in order to suit ourselves, to assuage our own superstitions and fears, to protect our investments in meaning. When we cannot frame our judgements in terms of good and evil, we speak of normal and abnormal.

But, as Nietzsche has shown us, it is not so much that we fear others because they are evil or abnormal; rather they become this because they are Other - alien, different, strange, unfamiliar to us.

Presented in this book is documentation of the work  
produced during 1985-6 within the Master of Fine Art  
course at the Tasmanian School of Art, University of  
Tasmania.

Anne Bennett

November 1986

Book Number



Cent  
Thesis  
BENNETT  
M.F.A.  
1987



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff and students for their criticism and help over the past two years and especially my family for all their support, without which this work would not have been completed.

Special thanks to Marie Thorne and Robert Sartain for their assistance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PROPOSAL	1
REVIEW OF PROPOSAL	3
SEMINAR PAPER I:	5
<u>Now and Then</u>	
- Lucy Lippard, the feminist art movement and me	
BE WITCH	53
- notes on witches and related ideas pertinent to the development of my content	
SEMINAR PAPER II:	61
<u>The moment of Carnival</u>	
- an investigation of carnivalesque discourse in the past and at the moment	
WORK PRACTICE 1985-1986	98



## STUDY PROPOSAL FOR M.F.A.

Anne Bennett 1985

The impetus of my work stems from ideas about the myths surrounding "witches" and the phenomenon of "witch hunts" and the traditions of masks.

Shrouded in mystery, superstition and fear, some such people whose behaviour is deemed 'different', and subsequently threatening have been seen as 'witches' - as 'others'.

"Witch figures of various types, whatever their sex or function, share characteristics which make them out not only as abnormal but also frightening". (John Widdowson, The Witch Figure)

The fiction of 'witch', in which 'suspected' people are encased is fabricated. Elements of empirical reality are interpreted, re-interpreted and mis-interpreted in respect of the beholders own social, ideological and emotional needs, often in order to validate a position of authority, invested with the 'moral', 'natural' right and obligation to dominate, to implement punishment of and to irradicate such 'possessed' beings.

Repeatedly, throughout the course of civilization, masks have been attributed the power to transform an individual into another being, personify the supernatural and deities; in effect, to dissimilate and depersonify the person behind. I am interested in the use of masks and masquerade; and the notion that not only can someone

don a mask in order to disguise (protect) his/her identity, but that we can also mask and transform the reality of a person in order to assuage our own needs. The way in which we perceive things, I believe is largely predetermined by our experiences, expectations and feelings.

I intend to produce a series of paintings (and drawings) which emanate from these concepts. My images will be derived through a process of isolating and exaggerating elements of figurative images, juxtaposing such segments with one another, and, perhaps by also layering and uncovering areas in order to construct a 'new' whole. Reworking and reshaping representations of people, imposing a different, distorted identity (an identity containing ambiguity, conflict and mystery).

Abstraction or the eclipsing of extraneous visual information will be sought to give a directness and potency to my images. I will endeavour to reach an equilibrium between the vestigial suggestiveness of abstraction and the accessibility that literal references provide. I feel the need to use paint and other materials, in affirmation of the art making process and in self-acknowledgement of my own fabrications (i.e. painted statements). Not wishing to either depict the 'visible' world or have my work equated with what is 'real' life, I pay particular attention to painterly concerns.

My first theory paper looks at the feminist art movement since 1970, focusing on the writing of Lucy Lippard. The issues raised move beyond my immediate preoccupations into a more general theoretical arena. In the second paper, I would like to deal with issues more central to my work (possibly based on the social theory of magic, witches and witch-hunts).



### Review of Proposal

In retrospect I would rephrase and emphasize other aspects outlined above. However I nevertheless believe that my MFA submission results from pursuit of the concerns contained in the proposal. Refinements, reorientations and expansions are both inevitable and desirable in any learning process. Over the past two years I feel I have developed and better resolved my initial conceptual ideas and established a better means of visualization of them, I regard this body of work as the solid basis for better work to come.

Contact with interstate and overseas artists and critics circulating through the school, in addition to continued criticism available from the resident staff and students, has facilitated a greater degree (or broader range) of questioning and re-evaluating of my work on my part.

The major divergence from my proposed course of study was the suggested topic for the 2nd seminar paper. This change also reflected an increasing change in emphasis (but not negation) within my art practice. By the end of 1985, it was becoming evident that the task of writing a paper which adequately covered the European 'witch' phenomenon within its social and historical context was not feasible. [However I offer some comment on this topic in the section titled 'Be witch' since it influenced the development of my concepts. I have done this largely for my own benefit]. Also by this time recognition of the figures in my painting as 'witches' had become less important.

Instead I investigated the notion of the Other within the traditions of masquerade.

This led me (at the suggestion of Julie Ewington) to write on the theme of carnival

~~and its corresponding modes of thought adopted into recent cultural theory,~~

concluding with a brief outline of the possible ramifications for the visual arts.

The ideas emanating from this research I found both stimulating and informative.

Unfortunately time has not permitted me to resolve my drawings. And as such

they remain notational; to be resolved at a future date.

November 1986.



SEMINAR PAPER I

NOW AND THEN

LUCY LIPPARD AND THE FEMINIST ART MOVEMENT AND ME

Presented: 31 July 1986.

under the aegis of Jonathan Holmes' series of MFA seminars

on recent American Art Critics

Too often artist works can seem to be going through a kind of aesthetic convalescence. They are looked upon as so many inanimate invalids, waiting for critics to pronounce them curable or incurable. (Lippard paraphrased (Two 1974).

Lucy Lippard, the New York art critic, made a notable contribution to the theoretical underpinning of minimalism in the 1960s, but rose to greater prominence with her unrelenting support of the Women's art movement and the subsequent development of its critical stance throughout the seventies and into the 1980s.

In tracing Lippard's changing feminist values over the past fifteen years and associated criticism, this paper acts as a personal attempt to piece together and reconcile the legacy of the Women's/Feminist Art Movement by a young Australian woman in the eighties.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed this investigation amounts to the first time as an adult (a little belated?) that the issues of Feminism and Feminist Art Theory have come under my scrutiny with any degree of attentiveness. For myself and most of my peers at high school the Women's Movement was not the burning issue it was for those even just a little older.

The 1970's constitute my childhood and adolescent years, and as a child/teenager my notion of feminism was not very clear. The Women's Liberation Movement was

1 Lippard has published three collections of essays in little over a decade and each of these books, Lippard notes "has marked the beginning of a specific phase of my life; though not necessarily its end". (Lippard (1984), p.vii Author's notes). Changing (1971) was the product of her formalist period, From the Center (1976) documented her developing conversion to Feminism, and the Get the Message? (1984) is the result of her "need to integrate the three sometimes contradictory elements of her public (and often private life) - art feminism, left politics" (ibid). The main thrust of the paper stems from Lippard's expositions: "The Women Artists' Movement - What next?" 1976(f), the catalogue essay, Issue and Taboo 1984(6), and "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970's" 1984(c).



somehow linked (distorted as it may have been) with the news media's stereotypical coverage of 'bra-burning women's libbers'; Helen Redie's song, "I am Woman", entangled amongst calls for equal career opportunities and pay - and of course Germaine Greer - who I knew by her notoriety rather than by her ideology.

### ONE OF THE BOYS

During the 1960s Lippard thought of herself as 'one of the boys' as did most other women in the art world. Notions of sexual distinctions were found objectionable and demoting. No wonder since, as Simone de Beauvoir revealed in 1957, women's place was 'second' and inferior to that of men.<sup>2</sup>

### THE NUMBERS GAME

With the advent of the Women's Liberation Movement (in 1970) from which sprang the Women's Art Movement both women artists and critics, including Lippard, became

---

2 "Before the movement, women were denying their identity trying to be neutral, and intentionally making art that couldn't be called 'feminine'. When somebody said "You paint like a man" or "You write like a man" you were supposed to be happy, and you were happy, because you knew you were at least making neutral art instead of feminine art - God forbid" Lippard (1976)(c), p.82. "Lippard admits that for years she was not attuned to the plight of women artists. She was a believing victim of the cliché 'if you got anyplace as a woman you must be better than most women' because everybody knew women were inferior. You couldn't identify with other women; the art world bore it out. There were virtually no women artists visible". Lippard (1976)(a), p.26. "Embarrassed" by feminism, when first confronted, Lippard resisted it, "declaring I was a person, not a woman. I was unwilling to admit my own oppression ... Resistance was dispelled when I wrote my first novel and was forced to examine a woman's life in terms of personal politics. I found my own lacking and fell into the arms of feminism in the summer of 1970" Lippard (1984), Prefatory Notes P.3.

Simone de Beauvoir, in 1957 argued that, men viewed women as fundamentally different from themselves and thus reduced women to the status of the second, inferior sex (see source Eisenstein (1984) p.3). The foundations laid down by de Beauvoir (along with others such as Betty Friedan) provided the grounding for the renewed discussion of feminism of the early 1970s. Feminist theory initially concentrated "on establishing the distinction between sex and gender, and developed an analysis of sex roles as a mode of social control". Arguing for the reduction of the poolarization between masculinity and femininity, it pointed explicitly or implicitly to the replacement of gender polarization with some form of androgyny before moving on to a woman-centred perspective. Eisenstein (1984), p.xi.

activists, lobbying for increased representation of art by women in the current gallery exhibitions.



Fig.1 Women Now, Winter 1970/71. Whitney Annual Protest by Ad Hoc Women Artist's Committee Photo: Amy Stromsten.

By 1975, New York saw the ratio of women shown in (for example) the Whitney Annuals increase from 2% to 20%. (Which the museum's director admitted in the New York Times was due to the public challenges mounted by such groups as the

Ad Hoc Women Artist's Committee [of which Lippard was a founding member]. A similar phenomenon also occurred in the Paris Biennial of that year.<sup>3</sup>

But Lippard feared that the increased numbers, 'a dubious triumph', would serve as a 'false sense of victory'; becoming a barrier to continued feminist change (see 1976(f), p.139, p.141). At this stage Feminism could be construed and thus misinterpreted as only a numbers game, - "a change in the number of women recognised as serious artists rather than a qualitative change in the meaning and practice of art" (Fenelon 1981/2); the male defined values, on which the status quo rested, remained intact.<sup>4</sup>

#### A WOMAN-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE

Also by this time (the mid seventies) the emphasis had shifted from androgyny to a women-centred perspective, women now "sought to isolate and define those aspects of female experience", seeing them as containing "the seeds of women's liberation". (Eisenstein 1984, p.xi). In answer to the question 'Is there a feminine sensibility?' Lippard responded vehemently yes, since "women's political biological and social experience in this society is different from that of a man", (1976(f), p.143); implicitly acknowledging art and artists as social products.

3 See Lippard 1976(6), p.61 (1976(6)) p.61 and also Lippard (1984) Prefatory Notes, p.24, Lippard also helped establish the New York Women's Slide Registry.

4 The quest to infiltrate the men's domain, Fenelon points out, is exemplified by that 'success story' Margaret Thatcher.

### SUPPORT STRUCTURES, ROLE MODELS AND SEPARATISM

Lippard promoted the establishment of women's support structures to ensure effective "consciousness raising" and solidarity. The Los Angeles Women's building stands as her golden example.<sup>5</sup> Role models in educational institutions, galleries, and art history books were sought. (Nochlin, Sutherland-Harris and Greer readdressed the imbalance in the art history accounts).<sup>6</sup> These structures provided "a familiar and sympathetic fabric rather than being an isolated and dissident voice",<sup>7</sup> bringing the woman artist and life together in contrast to the alienated/outcast of the artist of the male avant-garde tradition with its "reverse (or perverse) response to society". (Lippard 1984(f), p.153).

The separatist activities of the mid 1970s acted, in Lippard's opinion, as a valuable "training ground" but had the potential to become a "protective womb" (1976, Intro, "Changing since Changing" p.11). Total separatism of women in their lives as well as their art, (i.e. self sufficient sub cultures without a dialectical discourse with

5 Discussed at length in Lippard, "The LA Womans building", 1976 (b), pp.96-100.

6 Rediscovered and resurrected women artists of the past were added to the roll of honour. Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland-Harris with Women Artists 1550-1950 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., 1978), and Germaine Greer with The Obstacle Race - The Fortunes of Women Painters and their Work, (Secker and Warburg, Lond, 1979) made pioneering efforts to bring to light lost or ignored women artists and their works; showing that women played a part in the story of art and thereby establishing historical credibility and providing contemporary women artists with a sense of belonging. See Frueh (1984), p.42, see also Honig Fine (1978). However Griselda Pollock's and Roszika Parker's book, Old Mistresses - Women, Art and Ideology published in 1981 argues from the sounder theoretical basis achieved by some feminists by the early 80s.

7 Lippard (1984) Prefactory Notes to Section 111 "To the third Power - Feminism, Art and Class Consciousness", p.89.

male culture) had the possibility of becoming a ghetto, inhibiting any broad social change.<sup>8</sup>

### CELEBRATION OF THE FEMININE

Women were now bending backwards to make 'women's art' instead of 'men's art' or 'neutral art', insisting that there are cliches that define women's art", and Lippard similarly bent over backwards to establish these cliches (1976(c), p.89).<sup>9</sup> With this new found pride, media, content and style of art were reconsidered.

The status of women's traditional arts e.g. weaving and embroidery was elevated, celebrating its utilitarian aspects.<sup>10</sup> Biographic content was employed, giving credence to the 'Personal as Political'.

8 See Barry & Flitterman (1981/82), p.32.

NB. Lippard was never promoting total separatism nor separatism in the art world on a permanent basis, unlike some radical feminist and lesbian groups. Barry, Flitterman discuss the case of Terry Wolverton, co-director of Lesbian Art Project and point out problems; Janine Burke (1978/79) p.3 saw a fine line existing between "trenchant allegiance to the women's movement and blithely irresponsible separatism" which "must be drawn-firmly".

9 (My emphasis). Compare Eisenstein's (1984) p.xii description of this period "Instead of seeking to minimise the polarization between masculine and feminine, it sought to isolate and to define those aspects of female experience that were potential sources of strength and power for women, and more broadly of a new blueprint for social change".

10 The Art World standards were attacked for both class and sexist distinctions between high art; that made by men, with it's 'absolute aesthetic integrity' and low art (which has been omitted from art history) with it's "merely decorative" and "frivolous effects" is relegated to women (see Frueh 1984, p.43 and Barry and Flitterman (1981/82) p.32). Though as Tickner (1984) p.16 points out, 'high culture' soon moved to "embrace and absorb into it's pantheon those patchwork quilts and navajo blankets, ... prepared to see as posthumously authenticated by the corners of modernist painting. Our pleasure at their public re-valuation is offset by the ambivalence of their newly acquired commodity status.



Women were encouraged to give voice to personal experiences and to "express and document both women's oppression as well as aspirations" (Barry et al 1981/2, p.29); providing for women a liberating force and essential base to their art.<sup>11</sup>

Lippard saw the biographical content, as the "natural outcome of the previous isolation" along with the general process of consciousness raising of the women's movement. Approaches ranged from the autobiographical to the 'inwardly self'; this included costumes, and fanciful disguises among other things (1976 (e), p.108, 103). The supposedly private and personal realm of the home and family were redefined by feminists as political and not naturally arising from destined characteristics of the female condition; consequently open to politicization and change.<sup>12</sup>

#### STYLE - FEMALE IMAGERY

Formal elements such as layering, obsessive detail, central focus, tactile and sensuous surfaces were, according to Lippard 'feminine'.

... certain elements - a central focus (often 'empty', often circular or oval), parabolic baglike forms, obsessive line and detail, veiled strata, tactile or sensuous surfaces and forms, associative fragmentation, autobiographical emphasis, and so forth are found far more often in the work of women than men. There are also, of course, characteristics far more subtle and more interesting that cannot be pinned down in one sentence, and any such simple minded listing should raise opposition". (Lippard 1976(f), pp.143-144).

11 Lippard in an unpublished interview with Barbara Hall, October 1982, extolled:- "the more you start really understanding what goes on in the world, the more you can look back at yourself and understand how your so-called personal problems and personal history has been affected by far larger elements". Lippard, however is aware of the problem of "getting stuck in self and not being able to see outside that" (cited Sangia 1984, p.79).

12 See Tickner (1984), p.15.

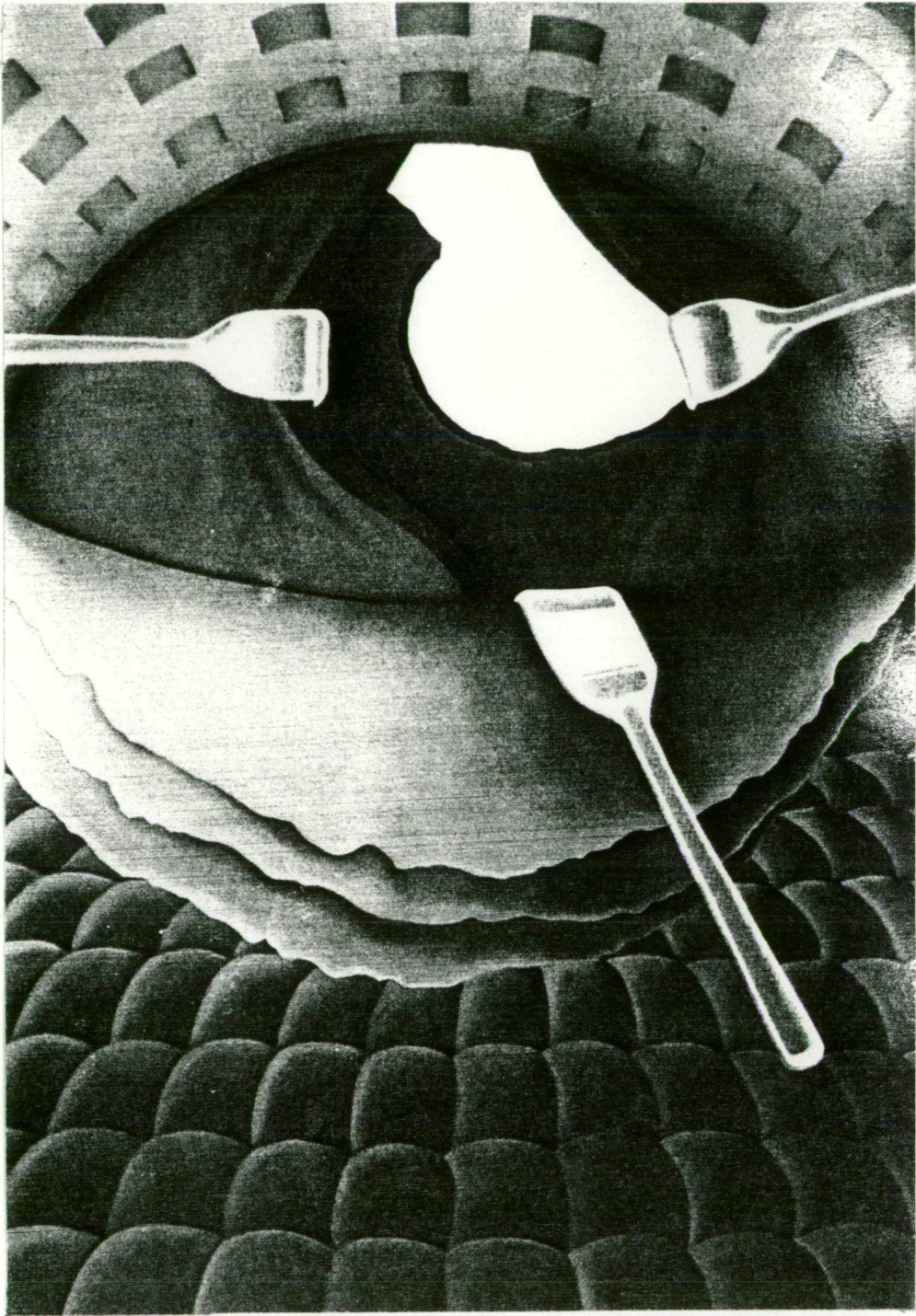


Fig.2 Cynthia Carlson, Untitled Oil on canvas, 60"x42".

The female body was also taken as the foundation of sexual difference, Lippard paraphrased Freud, "biology determines iconography" (Honig Fine 1978, p.148). Similarly the term 'vaginal iconography' was coined by Barbara Rose; and similarly Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro formulated the "central void" theory; later to be described by Lisa Tickner as "the explicit or stylized celebration of vaginal forms, the rhetorical refutation of 'penis-envy' and the restitution of women's missing genitals". (1984, p.16).

In her article "Why Separate Women's Art?" (1st Pub. 1973), Lippard suggests that prior to the advent of the women's movement and increased public exposure of women's art, that this 'true' feminine iconography was concealed. And whilst acknowledging that some men's art displayed similar features, Lippard simply passed this off as merely 'surface phenomenon'.<sup>13</sup>

In the fervour of the push in mid seventies to differentiate women's art from that made by men, is it not Lippard's claims of a 'feminine' style which are superficial? And which were also based on mere 'surface phenomenon'?

### ESSENTIALIST POSITIONS

Fundamentally, such positions advocated by the women's art movement during the early 1970s were essentialist<sup>14</sup> - glorifying eternal, essential female art powers. Although, they quite rightly revalued the undervalued, the terms of domination and

<sup>13</sup> See Lippard 1976(f) and 1984(c), Joanna Frueh also discusses this issue in relation to the work of Barnett Newman and Alfred Jensen.

<sup>14</sup> Both the work based solely on the female body and the work executed within women's sub-cultural traditions.

subordination tended to be simply 'reversed'. As Lisa Tickner points out it is "quilts rather than carvings, vaginal rather than penis envy" (1984, p.16).

Women and the representation of their 'female essence' is presented as unproblematic and ahistorical - implying that the category 'femininity' is fixed and rigid.<sup>15</sup>

For instance Judy Chicago's 'Dinner Party Project', Hester Eisenstein, notes embodies this "utopian quality of feminist thought" characteristic of the 1970s (p.xix). Indeed, according to Chicago herself, 'The Dinner Party' claims an immutable universality of the 'feminine', true for all women in all cultures and histories (to my mind this is an impossible position).<sup>16</sup> Tickner convincingly argues that such essentialist attitudes:

... may be comfortable, but ... is rather like raising a nationalist flag over a ghetto, it celebrates, but does not challenge the terms of femininity. (1984, p.16).

The real problem lies in looking for a feminine sensibility in the first place.

To run counter to the so-called mainstream is one way of developing a feminist context although therein lies the danger of being controlled by what one opposes. (Lippard 1976(f), p.148).

But Lippard fell into this trap. Her attempt to censure the male dominated 'reign of quality', at this time, did not encompass analysis of the male invented code of gender distinctions, embedded in the whole precepts of western society. Thus, feminist art criticism like the male counterpart also amounted to the mere "juggling of aesthetic criteria of art" to paraphrase Griselda Pollock<sup>17</sup>; only providing an

<sup>15</sup> Discussed further in Barry and Flitterman (1981/2), p.31.

<sup>16</sup> Rebutts against Chicago's Dinner Party are discussed later in this paper under subheading Political or Populist Rhetoric?

<sup>17</sup> Pollock (1982), p.7.

alternative guide to the appreciation and consumption of art. And as her colleague Rozika Parker points out it is "the rules of the game which demand scrutiny".<sup>18</sup>

#### GENDER ANALYSIS AND PATRIARCHAL POWER

The structural and deep rooted causes of women's subordination became widely acknowledged to be inseparable from broader questions of ideology, culture and the production of meaning. Extending beyond the personal, the feminist challenge in the early 1980s began to expose the active perpetration of gender distinctions by patriarchal ideology.<sup>19</sup> Various aspects of recent semiotic, psychoanalytic and marxist theory, proved fertile resources for this task.

Exposed was that long revered and intricately woven myth of 'woman', spun by men. The destiny of 'woman' was claimed to be timeless and biologically determined. She was ensnared in the 'natural' and secondary role as 'reproducer' or 'non-producer' which had been relegated to her. 'Woman's' domain remained domestic (or at most extended into the 'helping'/service professions). Further subjugated, 'woman' was rendered as 'alien' and the 'negative' of man rather than his complement; by her very nature she was unsuitable to enter the realms of politics, economics, law, science, technology and the arts, - in effect excluding her from the positions of power, firmly secured within the sanctuary of the producer - man.

18 Cited *ibid* p.14: Rozika Parker "Breaking the Mould" *New Statesman*, Vol.90, No.2537, 2 Nov 1979, p.682.

19 Patriarchal ideology refers to the set of male defined social, cultural and economic values and beliefs. Also termed 'male values', 'phallogocentric and cultural viewpoint', 'sexist ideology and male dominated culture' by various feminists. See Creed (1982/83), p.16.

This fiction of 'woman' is "monolithically employed" as a sign to signify not only female sex (and non male) but social order: "to ratify the continuing power of men over women" (Pollock 1982); legitimizing patriarchal ideology as not only the hegemonic order (throughout the Western world) but as the only one conceivable.

#### ART: THE SIGNIFYING PRACTICE OF PATRIARCHY

Art making has also been revealed to be a social production, not divorced from the rest of society, but capable of actively endorsing ideology. Griselda Pollock has argued, that art tends to be read as "paradigms rather than objects" (1982, p.5), and in this way, representation of women in Western art (as in the whole of Western society) reproduces the hierarchy between the sexes at an ideological level.

Apt were the words of Simone de Beauvoir uttered in 1957:

Representation of the world, like the world itself is the work of men. They describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth. (The Second Sex).<sup>20</sup>

Art history, falsely posited as universal, ahistorical, without class, sex or race, has also long perpetrated the values of patriarchal ideology, which, in the words of Lise Vogel is "clearly male upperclass and white",<sup>21</sup> functioning as a guide on "how to consume the great fruits of the human spirit" (Frueh 1984, p.4).

20 Cited Tickner 1984, p.29.

21 Cited Pollock 1982, p.14.



In fact, the sexual divisions are so deeply embedded in the discourse of modern art, that a profound contradiction exists between the ideological identities of the artist and women. The fact that the term woman artist was even coined epitomises (and maintains?) the subordinate role in which women are confined (see Pollock 1984, p.19-20).

The hidden sexual prerogative in modernist art is unveiled by the theory of the 'male gaze'.<sup>22</sup> 'Woman' is represented as object rather than subject; unable to return the gaze of the (male) spectator unlike most depictions of men, she is 'mute', and spoken for' by man.<sup>23</sup> By directly linking this 'privileging of vision' with sexual privilege, the feminist critique brings into question all representations of women, even by other women.

<sup>22</sup> Notably expounded by Craig Owens, Barbara Creed and Lisa Tickner for example.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Shirley Ardener's views women in anthropological terms as a 'muted' group. Perceiving Women ed. Shirley Ardener, (Malaby 1975, pp.1-28, 29-54). and "There is a loud silence when one searches for the meanings of women in the language' - Dale Spender, (Man Made Language, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p.54) - (cited Tickner 1984, p.15).

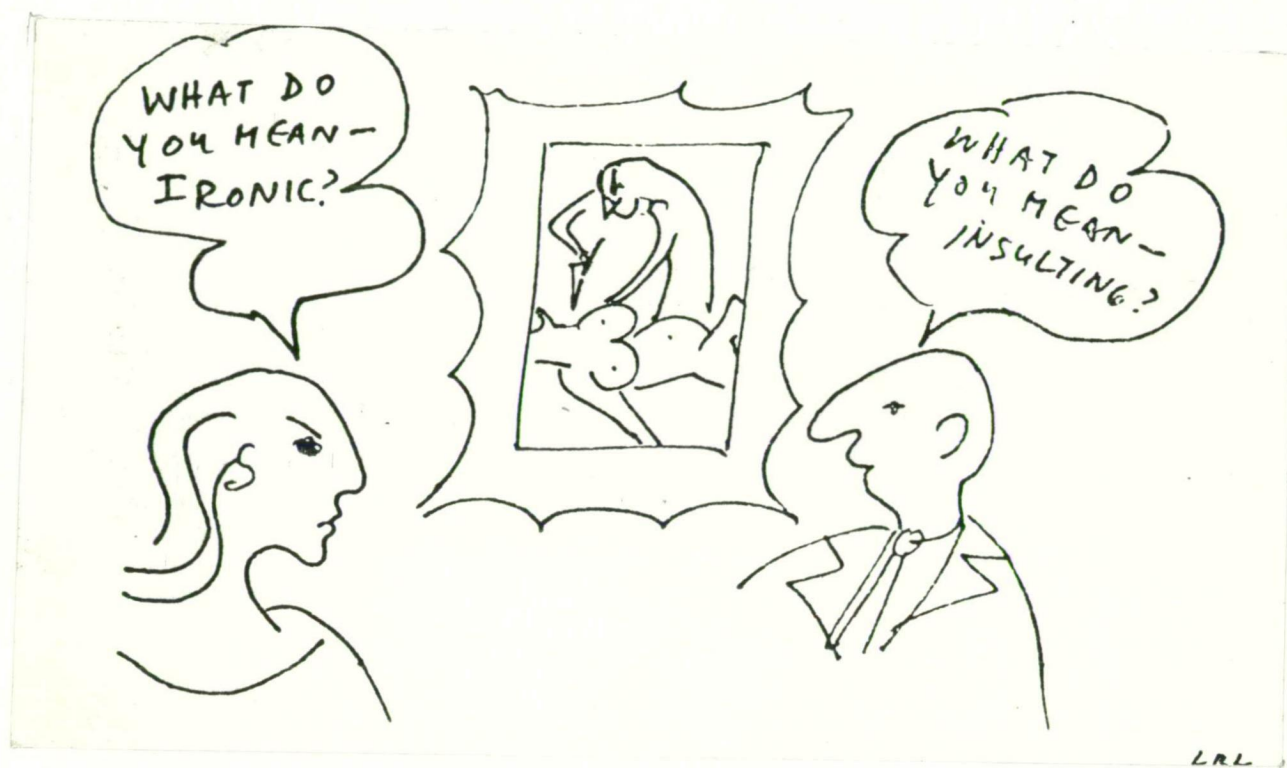


Fig 3. Cartoon by Lippard.

#### THE BODY POLITIC - RE-PRESENTATION OF WOMEN BY WOMEN

As Barbara Creed points out, "patriarchal ideology speaks through women as well as through men", p.26. During the mid to late 70s it became essential to clarify distinctions between feminist art and women's art in general. Attempts to do so previously (including Lippard's)<sup>24</sup> were rather tentative and superficial. Linda Gordon's broad definition of feminism proves particularly useful.

24 See Lippard (1976) "The Women's Artists' Movement - What Next?" p.145.

Feminism is an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it. (1979)<sup>25</sup>

Similarly Feminist art could be now defined as art which works against or resists the master narrative of patriarchy. To achieve this, many feminist artists started to seek a 're-presentation' of themselves and their sexuality from a critical understanding of existing codes of representation.<sup>26</sup>

#### MARXISM, FEMINISM AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF WOMEN?

Marxist ideology's importance to the feminist critique has been notably discussed by Griselda Pollock. She speaks not of a 'marriage' nor a 'cobbling together' but of

The fruitful raiding of Marxism for its explanatory instruments, for its analysis of the operations of bourgeois society and of bourgeois ideologies in order to be able to identify the specific configurations of bourgeois femininity and the forms of bourgeois mystification which masks the reality of social and sexual antagonism, and denying us vision and voice deprives us of power. (1982, p.21).

Pollock further warns of the problems inherent in Marxism which should be avoided:

Firstly, treating art as a simple reflection of the society that produced it i.e. an image of its class divisions.

Secondly, automatically assuming the artist as a representative of his or her class.

25 Cited Eisenstein (1984) p.xii). Linda Gordon "The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom Three Stages of Feminism", in Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism, ed. Zillah, R. Eisenstein (New York Monthly Review Press 1979), p.107.

26 Perhaps they were actually presenting a "re-representation". See Fenelon (1981/82) p.50. Lippard touches on some problems of this nature in From the Center (1976) and Tickner provides a valuable essay on strategies and problems of representing female sexuality in "The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists since 1970" (1978).

Thirdly, reduction of everything back to economic or material causes and

Fourthly, ideological generalization; placing an art work because of its obvious content into a category of ideas, beliefs or social theories of a given society or period. (see p.21).

However Marxism itself fails to address the issue of gender difference and without a feminist alliance remains patriarchal in nature.<sup>27</sup>

Griselda Pollock also does much to disperse the myth of womens universality. The term 'feminist art' is also often misinterpreted as one universally and homogeneous recognizable category. Pollock clearly states that while:

women as a sex have been oppressed in most societies, their oppression, and the way they have lived it or even resisted it has varied from society to society and period to period, from class to class. This historicity of women's oppression and resistance disappears when all women are placed in a homogeneous category based on the commonest and most unhistoricized denominator. (1982, p.15)

And further proposes that patriarchy does not refer to the

static, oppressive domination by one sex over another, but a web of psycho-social relationships which institute a socially significant difference on the axis of sex which is so deeply located in our very sense of lived, sexual identity that it appears to us as natural and unalterable. (1982, p.10)

<sup>27</sup> See *ibid* p.8, These problems with the marxist analysis are discussed at greater length. "The Revisionist attempt (such as Jameson proposes in The Political Unconscious) to explain the persistence of patriarchy as a survival of a previous mode of production is an inadequate response to the challenge posed by feminism to Marxism. Marxism's difficulty with feminism is not of an ideological bias inherited from outside, rather, it is a structural effect of its privileging of production as the definitively human activity" Owens (1983), p. I will also make mention at this point, the art in Socialist countries. The power of art as a political force has been clearly recognised in Socialist countries, "Yet, one reason why we can still not thoroughly discuss much art (for instance the work in 'Issue' (discussed further on) is that the Left itself has not expanded enough to include the options art must have - just as it has trouble incorporating feminist values", Lippard (1984), 'Issue & Taboo', p.140.



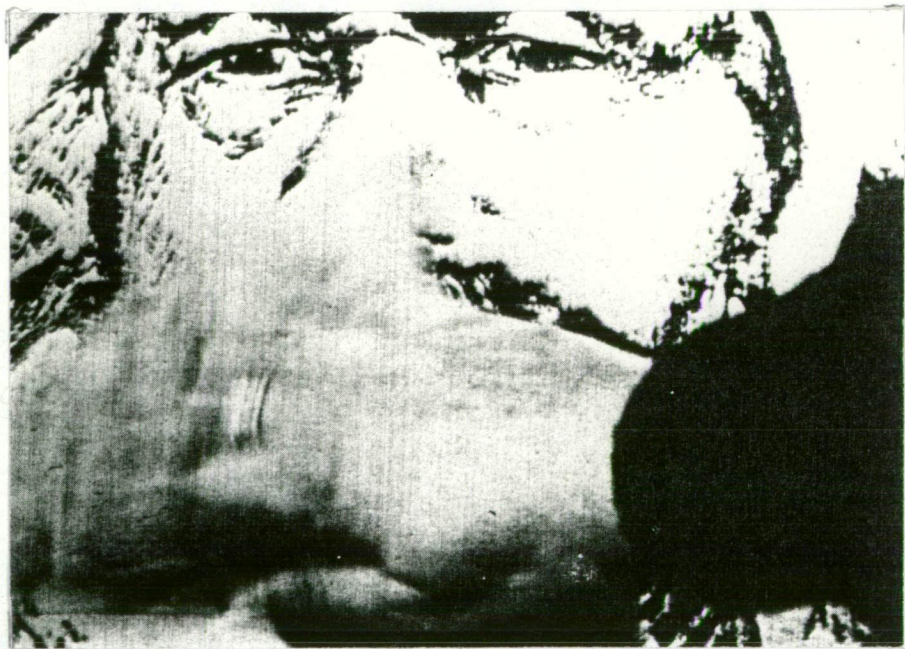
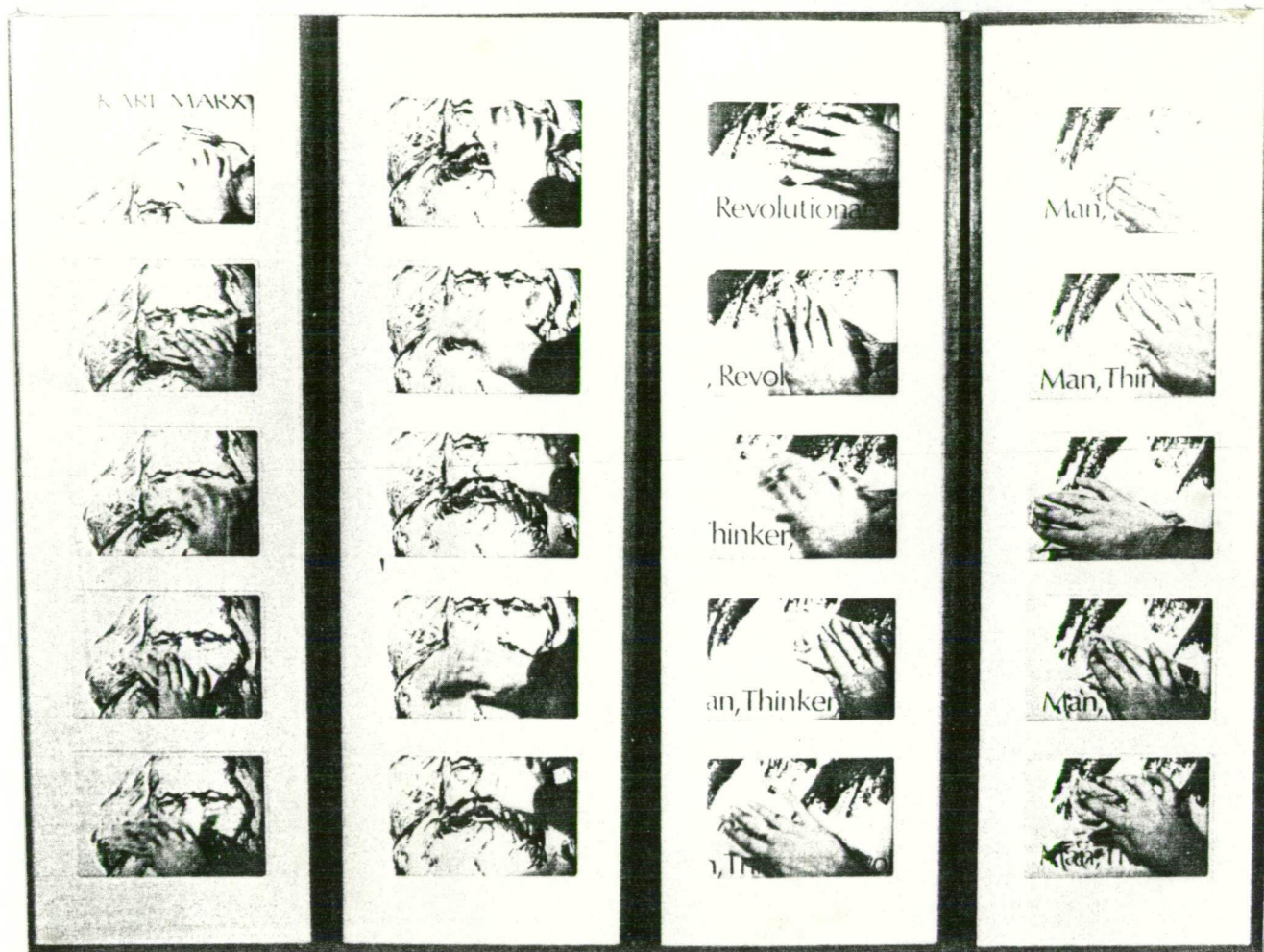


Fig.4 Alexis Hunter "The Marxist Wife (still does Housework)", Color Xerox, 4 panels of 20 photographs 15"x48", 1978.

Fig.5 Detail.

The political and personal analysis of our 'feminized status' which informs much feminist art, Jeanette Fenelon similarly argues will also reflect the "immensely diverse ethnic and class contexts of our lives" p.47.

#### LIPPARD ON ALL SIDES

Lippard's writings by the late 1970s onwards characterize this increased critical awareness achieved by many feminists (in particular British socialist feminists). For Lippard, the future development of feminism in the 1980s is 'inseparable' from socialism.

The transformation of society, at the heart of both feminism and socialism, will not take place until feminist strategies are acknowledged and fully integrated into the struggle. (Lippard 1984(6), p.125).

Since this is not the single objective of neither all Marxists nor all feminists, Lippard notes that feminist art has become "of necessity already a hybrid" (1984(9),



p.150).<sup>28</sup> Though Lippard - whilst accommodating the discrepancies between socialist, radical and cultural feminist thought wants to be on all sides to eliminate derisive fractionalism on the public front. In similar fashion, Hester Eisenstein has written,

I am sympathetic to the notion of letting a hundred or a thousand flowers bloom. As Shulman writes "for better or worse, any large political or social movement, powered by passion, must eventually sustain internal debates, divisions and splits". (1984, p.xvii-xviii).

Lippard (in 1980) states "The socialist feminist identity is itself, as yet a collage of disparate and not yet fully compatible parts" (1984(6), p.144).

#### THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEMINIST ART TO THE 1970S - Lippard's view

In 1980 Lippard re-examined the role of women's art in the last decade in her paper "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s".

28 I still spend a lot of time in one camp making excuses for my commitment to the other, and vice versa" Lippard (1984A, p.150, p.88). Note that Lippard in 1979 organised a show in Chicago called "Both Sides Now" which brought together women artists from both the socialist and cultural feminist factions. Also note Hester Eisenstein's thoughts: "recent analysts seem to agree on the distinction between radical feminism, which holds that gender oppression is the oldest and most profound form of exploitation, which predates and underlies all other forms including those of race and class; and socialist feminism, which argues that class, race, and gender oppression interact in a complex way, that class oppression stems from capitalism, and that capitalism must be eliminated for women to be liberated. Both of these, in turn, would be distinguished from a liberal or bourgeois feminist view, which would argue that women's liberation can be fully achieved without any major alterations to the economic and political structures of contemporary capitalist democracies. A final category would be a cultural feminist position, which eschewed an explicit political or economic program altogether and concentrated on the development of a separate women's culture. In recent years, however, the lines between these definitions have begun to blur somewhat, as feminist practice outstrips feminist theory: in the current women's movement, there are probably more subcategories and variations than these definitions can encompass". Eisenstein (1984) pp.XIX-XX.

From her self-confessed and "necessarily biased view" Lippard feels the contribution (also acknowledged by non-feminist people though sometimes, in a negative way) has been "too complex and subversive and fundamentally political to lend itself to such internecine hand-to-hand stylistic combat". (1984(c), p.149).<sup>29</sup>

"Feminism" according to Lippard, "is new only in the sense that it isn't post anything. Its formal precepts not being new at all". (ibid, p.141).<sup>30</sup> The stigma at being dubbed a 'retrograde' critic in the early 1970s, Lippard now thinks, is only valid if one remains attached to the modernist conditioning, such as her own art educational background. Feminist artists in the 1970s who went 'deeper' into visual forms that have been done before, Lippard applauds for having "resisted the treadmill of progress" (1984(c), p.151), continuing to explore their own 'social realities' with disregard to the current art fashions. After ten or so years of the feminist art movement Lippard hopes that we have "seen the last of the 'movements' that have traipsed, like elephants trunk to tail through the last century" (1984(c), p.152).

Thus the most positive effect of feminism on art Lippard proclaims is precisely its 'lack' of contribution to modernism and its alternative socially concerned emphasis developed within feminist methods and theory. Griselda Pollock, pointed out that it is not art which refers to social context that cannot be tolerated by the modernist

29 In her footnotes, Lippard mentions that "even the New York Times Critic", acknowledged the feminist artists impact on the art scene, "though he fears that it is "lowering' the artistic standards".

30 (1984A), p.151. Lippard also indicated her hesitation to employ the word 'new' in reference to Feminist art since having been "so distorted in the name of modernism" p.151, e.g. 'new reality', 'new realism', 'new abstraction' etc. Similarly Lippard views the prefix 'post' with distaste. Perhaps this is why Lippard and other feminists have avoided the Post modern debate? Although they would applaud the break down of master narratives, perhaps they suspect post modernism to be just another male style?

establishment, but that which fundamentally challenges the image of art which it strives to perpetuate. Therefore feminist art constitutes such a threat.<sup>31</sup>

The Feminist insistence that the personal (and thereby art itself) is political has, like a serious flood, interrupted the mainstream's flow, sending it off into hundreds of tributaries. (Lippard 1984(c), p.149).

This pluralism of the 1970s (which may not have occurred, Lippard suggests without the women's art movement) she likens to 'a kind of compost heap', where women sift out the fertile from the sterile, recycling these 'worn-out' concepts by changing not only the trimmings, but their functions as well. In the feminist quest to occupy ideologically strategic terrain (paraphrasing Pollock), a cross-disciplinary art practice flourished; including collective, community based, conceptual and performance work not seen before. But while much of the feminist socially and politically orientated art "forced a break in the usual discourses of Modernist criticism", as Julie Ewington fears, it was only 'battered' not 'broken'.<sup>32</sup>

### The Pitfalls

The total rejection of male dominant critical criteria, by a number of feminists, opened the way as Clara Weyergraf cynically indicates for "trivial symbolism and knickknacks" (p.13). It appears that many feminists did accept any art made by women without any discrimination at all. In hindsight Lippard saw that adoption of

31 See Pollock 1982, p.5. In 1973, in the Studio International column, 'One', Lippard pondered whether something is more valuable if done first or done most effectively? and how often a similar aesthetic problem could be approached without becoming 'exhausted'? or whether the concept of aesthetic exhaustion was akin to the rapidity with which natural resources are wasted in Western society? (Lippard (1973, p.103).

32 Ewington 1982, pp.66.

certain clichéd images, materials and approaches had become traps for various feminists.<sup>33</sup> But it is precisely because of Lippard's earlier enthusiasm and (influential) encouragement of these clichéd images that Lippard is rebuked by Weyergraf.

Despite the drawbacks, Lippard firmly asserts that the feminist values which 'permeated' the 1970s are set to 'flower' throughout the 1980s. With a visual and verbal language that can express art and ideas "without being sappy and without denying the powers of the individual within collective dialogue ..." (1984(c), p.151).

Feminism's contribution to recent art practice reveals itself no longer in 'shapes but structures' - structures which Lippard claims contain the possibility of changing "the vehicle itself - the meaning of art in society" (ibid). Thus testifying to Lippard's move away from her theory of a feminine style to that of a feminist ideology.

#### MALE CRITICISM - SOME STRATEGIES

Patriarchal critical discourse, traditionally smothered women's art with a feminine stereotype; operating the necessary term of difference to secure the hierarchy enjoyed by male artists. In the late 1970s distinctions between 'feminist' and

33 Lippard (1984) 'Sweeping Exchanges' p.151: "images (for instance fruit, shells, mirrors), materials (such as papers and fabrics), totally non-elitist approaches and emotions (e.g. non-transformative pain, rage and mother love); and at times a certain naivety arising out of a wholesale rejection of high art especially abstraction and painting, and the unthinking acceptance of literally anything done by a woman".



Fig.6 Cartoon by Lucy the Lip, "Above it All and Below it All (2) with Polly Tickle", from four-page comix published in Images and Issues, Winter 1980-81.

'feminine' were made by male critics with "the former the object of exclusion, dismissal and denigration" (Pollock).<sup>34</sup>

Another strategy, Roszika Parker has indicated, is to accept 'the reasonable' feminists who just want equal rights i.e. 'a piece of men's pie (Lippard) and lamblast the others who want social change.<sup>35</sup>

#### FEMINIST ART AS IDEOLOGY FOR THE 1980s

For Lippard 'feminism' in the 1980s "is an ideology, a value system, a revolutionary strategy, a way of life" (1984(c), p.150).<sup>36</sup>

And by extension feminist art in the 1980s with its desire for social change, Lippard notes is also 'hugely ambitious'. She believes that a developed feminist consciousness brings with it an altered concept of reality and morality which is crucial to the art and the artists' lives. Though "it remains to be seen whether different is indeed better" (Lippard 1984(c), p.153).

To my mind, clashes of opinion also would be inevitable as there is no single, cohesive idea of what actually constitutes or should constitute the 'different'. In addition, like Hester Eisenstein and Jane Adams believe;

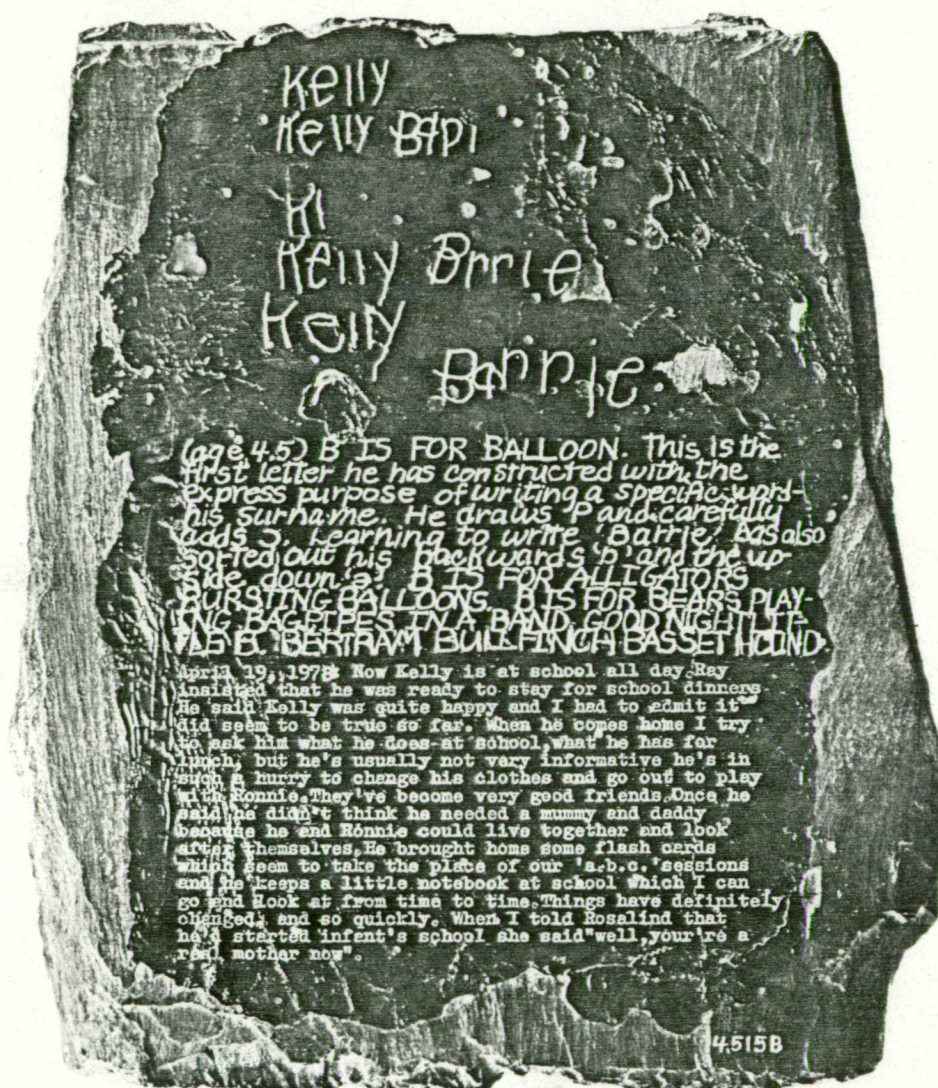
34 (Cited Parker (1981)) Pollock, "Femininity, Feminism and the Hayward Annual" 1979, Feminist Review, No.2.

35 See Parker (1981) p.16. Waldermar Janusck's critical approach serves to exemplify Parker's point.

36 Lippard (1984(c)) footnotes a comparison with the ideals of Surrealism and Dada.



*the Name . . . .*



*an institution, an author and a text.*

Fig.7 Mary Kelly, Documentation VI: Prewriting Alphabet, Exerque and Diary/Experimentum Mentix VI: On the Insistence of the Letter, 1979. 15 units 35.6x27.9cm (incised relief), exhibited in Issue show ICA London 1980.

women [also] are perfectly capable of being corrupted by power but up to the present historical moment simply have not been given the opportunity. (Eisenstein 1984, p.xiv).

Central to the concept of feminist (or social change) art is the two-way process or dialogue between the audience and the artist's work. Ideology is not a simple matter of true or false consciousness; meaning is not prescriptive and closed (unlike modernist view of art) but rather involves "a process of discovery" (Barry and Flittermann, p.34). by the viewer. The spectator actively participates in the production of meaning through a 'dialectic play' between s/he and the art work.<sup>37</sup>

Jeanette Fenelon has said, "The visual arts, as an enlightening or didactic tool is fraught with the limitations of that imprecise medium" (p.34). This places the artist as producer in a new situation of responsibility for his/her images. To prevent their art reinforcing what it intends to subvert the artist must minimize the possibility of the images or mode of representation being open to misinterpretation.<sup>38</sup>

There is also a danger that the artist will presume that the audience has knowledge that it does not have, knowledge which is central to the theory from which the work stems, preventing a dialectic play of meaning with the spectator. For example the work of Mary Kelly which requires an understanding of Lacanian psychoanalysis may only be accessible to a select group of people. Fenelon also points out that statement of the artist's intention also does not guarantee the

37 Note: Frueh (1984) p.44, "It is as a participant (the viewer) in this interplay that s/he can truly penetrate the art and it her/him, that s/he can know it as subject".

38 Fenelon 1981/82 p.48 has cited the work of Hanah Wilke and Gina Pane as examples. This work has also been criticised by Lippard on much the same grounds, see (1976).

realization of the 'meaning' (see p.51). Ultimately the meaning of art will be bound up with the audiences' knowledge and own ideological stance.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE TABOOS

The future of feminist art, which Lippard sees as inseparable from social change /political art is aimed at breaking the taboos which protect the codes inherent in patriarchal bourgeois dominant society. She stresses the imperativeness to understand the ways these codes operate and the reasons behind them, "because even the least daring woman's art is judged by criteria based on such anti-pathetic values" (1984(6), p.140). She also warns that "new taboos arise from rebellions against old ones",<sup>39</sup> including complete rejections of all patriarchal endorsed views of women. Lippard also stresses that the subject matter override the importance of form - the reverse of the male avant-garde practice. The extant taboos which diminish the power of art's effectiveness are often confusing and hidden; and "rooted in the social expectations of art", which in turn are rooted in class.<sup>40</sup>

39 (1984(b)) p.140 "It seems to me that to reject all of these aspects [e.g. "the myths and energies of women's distant histories and earth connections" p.147] of women's experiences as dangerous stereotypes often means simultaneous rejection of some of the more valuable aspects of our female identities" Lippard p.147.

40 1984(b) pp.140-144. The discussion of class expectations of art is continued at some length.

# POLITICAL ART - AS TABOO

"With its terrible reputation", Lippard suggests that political art may be the only taboo left (in the 1980s) in the art world, suggesting that it may threaten the status quo which the avant-garde supports. She also feels that "women's political art has a doubly passionate base from which to operate".<sup>41</sup>

Good political art must raise questions as well as confirm convictions. Within the art world there is the danger of preaching to the superficially converted. (1984(6), p.124).

Lippard does acknowledge that she herself has been accused of doing this. Lippard's belief that political art may be the last taboo left in art, is her personal stance, (a sweeping claim indeed) and may arise from finding the art exhibited in galleries 'poisonous by context'. Though as mentioned above, Lippard is aware that new prohibitions can arise from rebellions against old ones.

## "ISSUE"

I briefly wish to mention the exhibition 'ISSUE' which Lippard instrumented. It was the third in a series of shows held in 1980 at the I.C.A. (Institute of Contemporary Arts) Gallery, the first establishment 'approved' women's shows to be held in

41 1984(b) p.140 "for better or worse, mixing art and politics today is like mixing water and oil. The two have seemed hopelessly incompatible to most would be mixers. The reasons - too complicated to elaborate in an introduction - include the absorption of most 'protest art' into the market-oriented maw of the art world ... feminism's not-always-successful struggle against the sexism inherent in a male-dominated culture; the apparent futility of defining socialist programs in a capitalist society, and the reign of "quality" which derides all socially concerned art as 'low', or "crowd-pleasing", or just plain "bad" art". Lippard (1984(a), p.124). Lippard has previously attempted to rehabilitate the word "propaganda" in favourable terms.

London, all of which demonstrated the "multiplicity of feminist art practices" (Parker 1981, p.18). Lippard saw the show as adding to "the full panorama of social-change art" (1984(6), p.125), placing so-called women's (personal) issues in a much broader perspective of social concerns and consequently providing a "fresh look at feminist art from a different angle" (1984(6), p.126).

Such a broader approach, Lippard posits, is crucial to the further development of feminist art. Some of the work in 'Issue' dealt with "messages about global traumas such as racism, imperialism, nuclear war, starvation and inflation" (ibid). Other taboo subjects were tackled, such as domesticity, unemployment and budget cutbacks, timely subjects which are not publicly acknowledged to be threatening to the status quo but are simply dismissed as "boring" or "unesthetic".

Taboo subjects inevitably include a panoply of feminist preoccupations such as rape, violence against women, incest, prostitution and media distortion. (1984(6), p.125).

Most of these topics are dealt with by the news media in a mystifying and sensational way. Lippard suggests that they are more palatable as a form of entertainment than as 'fine art'; she continues, their focus of novelty deprives them of meaning, though they are actually the most pressing issues of our time.<sup>42</sup>

The artists included in the show were of different nationalities, different races, different class and aesthetic 'backgrounds' and 'foregrounds', thus the (necessarily) embraced feminist ideas in varying styles; "in very different degrees and operating from very different political assumptions" (1984(6), p.131). Lippard also noted that discourse around feminist and sociopolitical art varied substantially from the U.S.A.

---

<sup>42</sup> See ibid p.137. Lippard indicates that Candice Hill-Montgomery, Margia Kramer, Alexis Hunter, and Marie Yates confront this situation.

to U.K. to Europe etc.<sup>43</sup> "The web of interconnections and disagreements" Lippard hoped would "cross boundaries of medium, esthetic and ideology to facilitate a transatlantic and cross cultural dialogue" (1984(6), p.126).

The aim of the 'Issue' show was to focus on examples of activist art, rather than present value judgements about what constitutes the only effective feminist or political art or aesthetically successful feminist art. Some of the participating artists (who generally are "moving out" of the mainstream art world into the 'real' world) have exhibited documentation of art practice done at other sites while others directly addressed the gallery context, attacking it from within.<sup>44</sup>

"Those who cynically characterize such work as "gallery socialism", Roszika Parker summarises, "would perhaps prefer feminists not to disturb the easy tenor of gallery life" (1981, p.19). Helen Grace believed that the show did challenge the usual passive audience relation, requiring "its audience to engage fairly intensely in reading and looking", but at the risk of the less diligent spectators closing "off entirely" (see 1981/82, p.16).

43 Detailed discussion Lippard 1984(b), pp.131-132.

44 Ibid p.126. The documentation of the pieces executed outside the gallery, Helen Grace found "both frustrating and intriguing". Some of these pieces only achieved meaning with the gallery "in spite of their social involvement" (for e.g. the work of Mierle Laderman-Ukeles), "more satisfying" was those pieces (for e.g. Mary Kelly's work) which was aimed at the gallery context. Grace (1981/82) pp.16-17.



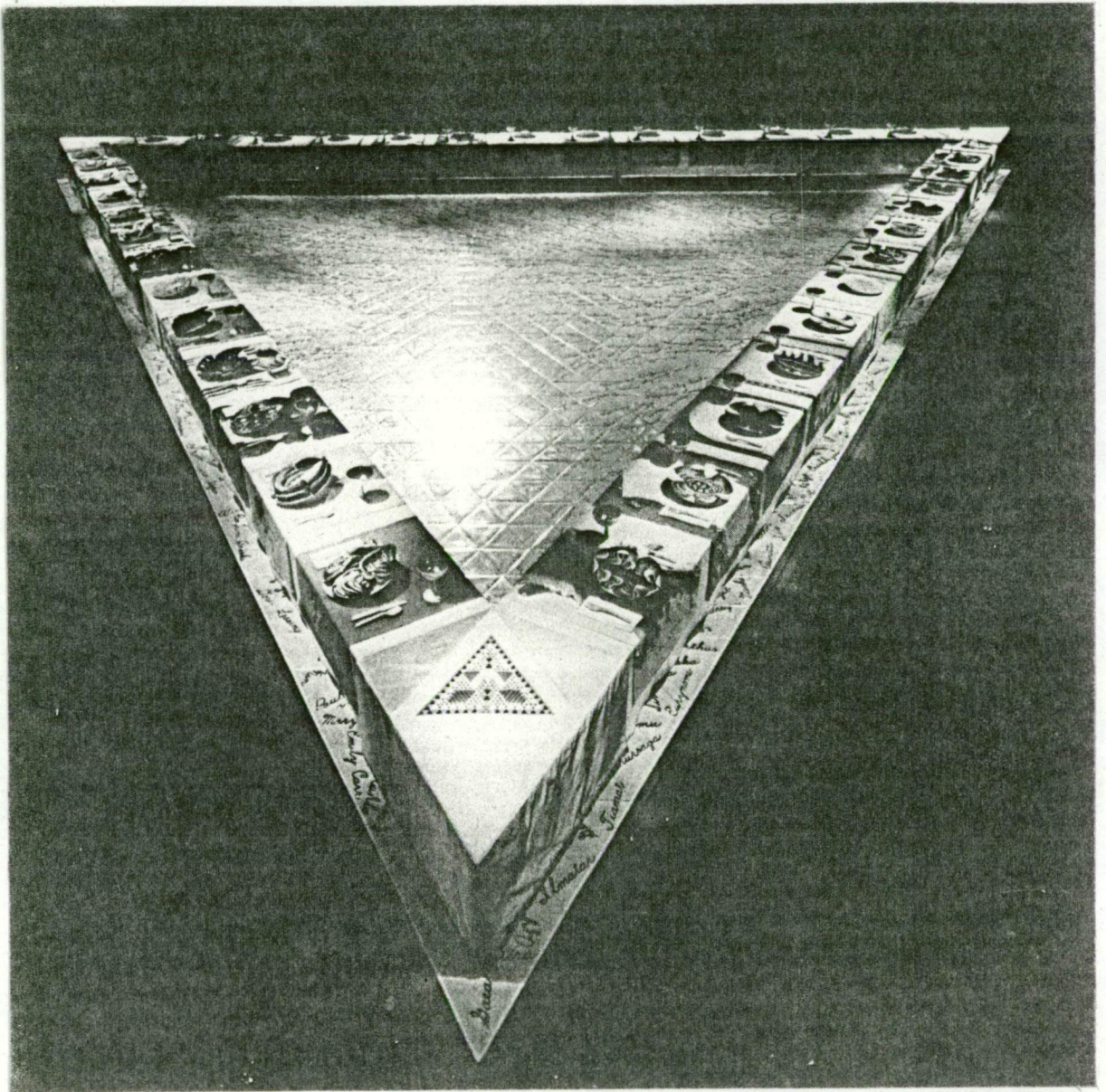
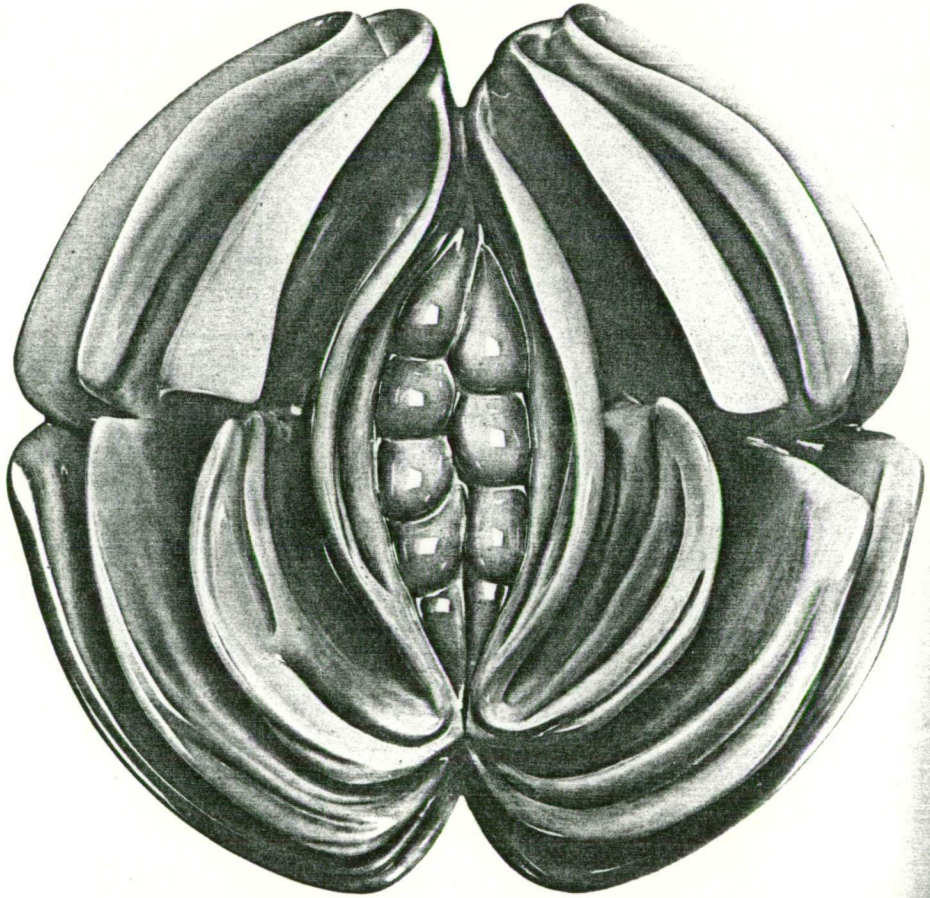


Fig.8 Installation shot of "The Dinner Party" by Judy Chicago and co-opted workers, completed 1979.



*moreover, that the tyranny of men had to be broken*



*Virginia Woolf*

Fig.9 The Virginia Woolf plate from "The Dinner Party".

### POLITICAL OR POPULIST RHETORIC?

Lippard is aware of the ease of falling back onto "acceptable modernism fringed with leftist rhetoric"; (1984(6), p.137) employing only token messages within the art work. But Lippard's politics have been taken to task.

Clara Weyegref, in her article "The Holy Alliance: Populism and Feminism" rebuts Lippard for substituting a 'populist rhetoric' for truly political art. Weyegraf directs the thrust of her attack against Lippard's support of Chicago's 'Dinner Party' and its essentialist implication - which she describes as reeking of "populist humanism and its feminist variant". Indeed, Lippard's position on the 'Dinner Party' seems contradictory to the rest of her views of the late 1970s, early 1980s. In Lippard's essay, "Setting a New Place: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party",<sup>45</sup> she categorically claims the "Dinner Party" to be a kind of 'Last Supper' a symbol of hope which shines out for all women. This universality which Chicago also claims for the "Dinner Party" is "a product of the dominance of the culture of which Chicago herself is a product" (Grace 1981/82, p.14) and for that matter, Lippard too.

### Defense of Political Art

"The intervention within specialised cultural areas, like art and academic institutions"; and for instance the 'Issue' exhibition which in spite of their relative inaccessibility, and having little to offer those "compelling" global problems, as Helen Grace points out "still have an effect on us, in generating ideas", that is codes and

45 Republished Lippard (1984) pp.109-113.

taboos "which we absorb in defining ourselves, our role in the world and our relative worth in relation to 'higher' notions of quality and creativity determined by 'international' art" (Grace 1981/82, p.18), (including, perhaps, international women's art).

#### LIPPARD'S MODELS FOR FUTURE (FEMINIST) ART PRACTICE

In 1980 Lippard lays out "models (that) feminism offers art" (1984(c), p.153). She indicates that although no single artist incorporates all of these models, overlaps occur, and further notes that some men have contributed to these notions.<sup>46</sup>

These models for feminist (socialist) value system insist upon cultural workers supporting and responding to their constituencies:

1. group and or public ritual;
2. public consciousness raising and interaction through visual images, environments, and performances, and
3. co-operative, collaborative, collective and anonymous art making.

---

46 Ibid p.154. Lippard continues: "these models are being passed into the mainstream slowly and subtly and often under masculine guise - one of the factors making the pinning down of feminism's contributions so difficult".

According to Lippard:

... these three models are all characterized by an element of out reach, a need for connections beyond process or product, an element of inclusiveness which also takes the form of responsiveness and responsibility for one's own ideas and images - the outward and inward facets of the same impulse. (1984(c), p.154).

Ritual art involves repeated acts of the art work and with integral interaction with the audience and with the possibility of being performed again. It fills a personal and communal need for a 'broader framework' within which to make art.

The second model Lippard sees as working in that gap between art and life. It involves more overt political art, often utilising media, such as books, film and video, and often taking place in public centres such as schools and shopping areas.

Among its main precepts is that it does not reject any subject, audience or context and that it accepts the changes these make in the art. (ibid.)

Within the third model, much art is directed at wide audiences, executed by various combinations of artists, or of artists and non-artists, often anonymously or under the rubric of a collective, or network, or project.<sup>47</sup> From her own experience Lippard finds, of collaborative work, that dialogue or critical self-critical method stimulates new kinds of working methods and a new flexibility. By integrating feedback into the process and not just as the final response to the product, it also

<sup>47</sup> This aspect, in particular, Lippard admires of the Dinner Party Project in Model 3 Lippard makes the following distinctions:

Cooperatives - where one individual artist is helped realise his/her work on a monumental scale by others who in return receive aid with their own work.

Collaboratives - where members work on a joint project in accordance with their own special skills, needs and concerns.

Collectives - where there is equal participation, execution and decision making by all members of the art project.

changes the individual work. However Lippard also maintains that individual work is not precluded by any of the models.

### Media

These models, Lippard feels, are more easily applied to the mass-reproduced mediums such as video, posters and publications<sup>48</sup> while still acknowledging their adoption as underlying aesthetics in the traditional modes of painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking. Lippard also believes that use of both word and image aids politically effective art. Above all, she pleads that artists should work from an understanding of how the mass media forms are generally used to communicate to the public, to enable the artist to make images that are more potent.

Work of this kind "could" infiltrate the mass media where it would puzzle, provoke and perhaps outrage a broader audience. (1984(b), p.124).

The structures or patterns that Lippard posits, is "laid out on a grid of dialogue" (1984(c), p.156). She sees feminist art practice as a collage method, a "way of knitting the fragments of our lives" (ibid) such as race, class and gender with the potential of leaving nothing out. Political consciousness facilitates some sort of ordering to these pieces, though not creating a new whole. There is no one way out, feminist art, according to Lippard is still "an art of separations" (1984(b), p.144). The socialist feminist model, that Lippard advocates:

48 In regard to those working with the mass media, Lippard has said: "artists also feel that they have more control over their own work and its distribution, in the process choosing their own audience or at least not letting their audience be chosen for them" (i.e. the non-gallery going public has access to their art) (Lippard 1984(b) p.127).



does not stop at the point of escape or rejection. To change the character of art is not to retreat from either society or art ...

These models

... locate a network of minor roads that simply cover more territory than the so-called 'freeways'. These roads are not, however dead ends. They simply pass more people's houses, and are more likely to be invited in" (1984(c), p.158).

#### BACK IN AUSTRALIA

In the essay "Out of Control: Australian Art on the Left" (1982) Lippard describes the situation here as a 'cultural hybrid'.<sup>49</sup> Helen Sangia on the other hand, feels that Lippard views us with a 'matronising regard'. Indeed Lippard's considerable influence on the Australian Women's art movement has not gone without review. Sangia, in her article 'Lippard in Australia' LIP (1984), points out that much of recent Australian women's art has been fueled by the ideas and currents emanating from the U.S. and 'validated' by Lippard and she finds

it interesting to note our past acceptance of Lippard, considering our usual suspicion of any American influence. (p.79).

Standard texts prescribed (in Australia also) on women's issues regularly include Lippard's writings. The Australian feminist magazine LIP tended to absorb many such overseas influences in its 'undiscriminatory' documentary approach. Though as Ross Gibson has pointed out (in a M.F.A. Seminar June 1985), such 'pluralism' must be viewed in regards to the 'polemic and time sphere'. But one must always

<sup>49</sup> Also quoted in Sangia (1984) p.80.

remember that the systems of distribution and subsequent accessibility of art criticism have given currency to a lot of work such as Lippard's (Grace) and in the process has perhaps eclipsed other valuable work done elsewhere.

Helen Grace in her article "From the Margins: A Feminist Essay on Woman's Art" (1981) is anxious that Australians recognise that the ideas emerging from 'elsewhere', particularly from the U.K. and U.S.A. have been formed within differing economic, social and political climates and historical backgrounds to those here.

Whilst one would not wish to suggest that ideas from elsewhere are of no use to us (cultural isolation is of no use to us either) it is relevant to consider the effects of our non-critical adoption of and resultant dependence on these ideas. (Grace 1981/82, p.13).

#### SUMMING UP LIPPARD

Lippard's preoccupation with shared female images in the early 1970s moved to a search for shared aesthetic and political approaches and a theoretical frame work in which to set these 'ubiquitous' images.<sup>50</sup> Her later writings (reflecting widespread feminist trends) consciously analyse the structures and effects of male dominant society and endorse social-change art which would operate as a didactic element in society. Lippard's promotion of feminist/political art and the three feminist/marxist models that I have outlined may possibly be construed or misconstrued as prescriptive, and as such may foster the institutionalizing of yet another set of

<sup>50</sup> Paraphrasing Lippard 1984(b), p.125-6.

codes, threatening exploration and discovery of subtler, less overt, through equally potent approaches.<sup>51</sup>

I agree with Lippard that art should contain accessible (though not closed) content, and negate the passive audience syndrome by perhaps moving out of the gallery into the world (or moving the gallery into the world?)

However, Lippard's fevour and enthusiasm to rally women to the feminist cause at times may infer a fictional universality. Whilst her short comings and inconsistencies need to be criticised, this must happen in respect to the context from which they emerged. A number of writers continually chastise Lippard's views of the mid 1970s in the 80s without acknowledging her revised position. Indeed Lippard's views do not remain static. In reference to her early writings she wrote "I am simultaneously annoyed by their arrogance, amused by their naivete and touched by their passion".<sup>52</sup> By far, Lippard's most outstanding and consistent contribution has been her unrelenting efforts to draw attention to the diversity of art made by women.

Lippard's views should always be seen as her personal position, "one which qualifies her own status as a critic as well as recalling her matronizing influence over the

---

51 Though I think Lippard would acknowledge that a critical position all through often exerting a powerful and widespread influence does not actually "create the art that it promoted, nor does it prevent absolutely the making of other modes of working". (Ewington 1982, p.73) and I believe she would encourage artists to continually evaluate and re-evaluate their critical stance.

52 Lippard (1984) Prefatory Note to Chapter 1 'Dilemma' p.4. According to Jude Adam's (1977) p.54: "Lippard freely acknowledges her own ambiguity and conflict concerning her views on art and society as well as her position as a critic". Lippard (1976) p.25. "I am caught in a state of being totally aware that I am supporting a system I abhor by writing criticism - and yet being hooked enough on art to find it hard to stop especially if I can get more women's work seen and taken seriously in the process".

Feminist art of the past". (Sangia 1984, p.79). But Lippard does not want the last word and fears the reader "swallowing everything whole".<sup>53</sup>

#### THE CONFESSIONAL - RELEVANCE TO MYSELF<sup>54</sup>

With Julie Ewington I tend to agree: "The 1980s should be characterized not as a period of pluralism, nor as a period of renewed Modernism, but as a time when the explosion of theoretical and practical meanings available to us make possible arts which evade antiquated orientation to an avant-gardist position ... What is wanted is many arts in fact, but all should make meanings available to us, rather than obscure them, for whatever reasons. This is work well started in the last ten years, by Feminist art workers and others and far too exciting to be surrendered now" (1982, p.72).

I feel that Lippard would also agree with this in spirit.

However, the basis from which to produce art is not such a bed of roses! While gains have been made, women for the most part are not free of constraints that have historically oppressed them.

My past hesitancy to adopt a term such as 'feminist' was due to not knowing the full implications of the word and also (perhaps still) because of the all too

<sup>53</sup> Lippard interview by Faure-Waller (1975) p.185.

<sup>54</sup> Since delivering this paper I have come into contact with Julie Ewington and Sarah Kent (the British critic who curated the British contingent for the 6th Biennial of Sydney 1986) whose influence may show in the final draft of the conclusion.

apparent and widespread exaggerations and misinterpretations attributed to this heterogeneous category. But this does not dispell my desire to escape that old patriarchal mould marked 'feminine'.<sup>55</sup>

My supportive family situation has also done much to quell feelings of immediate oppression.

In the past I found discussion of handicaps distasteful, as it implied inferiority, and I refused to consider myself subordinate from the outset because of my sex. However, without fully understanding the 'taboos', the established codes that operate in our society, therein lies the danger that one could unconsciously perpetrate (even by passivity) when not wishing to do so, the bourgeois, male dominant culture which although receiving a battering (by feminists, marxists, and others) in Australia is still significantly intact.<sup>56</sup>

It must also be recognized that personal goals and aspirations <sup>can</sup> oppose but are never (completely) free from the influence of prevailing cultural values. In order to be capable of negating or resisting the extant sexual perogatives, I feel the feminist critique remains a pertinent resource, not only to women, but also to men, precisely since they are non-female. But, the answers to many questions relating to representation and the production of art remain open and illusive.

Is one passively reinforcing patrtiarchal values unless the issue of representation of women or sexuality are directly challenged? or authorised 'women's issues'?

55 The mould which feminists are desparately trying to break.

56 Note: "Any discourse which fails to take account of the problem of sexual difference in its own enunciation and address will be, within a patriarchal order, precisely indifferent, a reflection of male domination". Stephen Heath, "Difference" Screen 19, 4 (Winter 1978-79) p.53 - source Owens (1983) footnote 11, p.79.

Does the traditional mode of oil painting immediately affirm the male endorsed values? Will women who paint (as I do) become displaced people, lost within the male ranks? If this is so, won't women's continued non-participation in this 'high' art form become another prohibition, once enforced by men but now endorsed by a feminist orthodoxy?

Is there any discourse available to the Western world which is not tainted by patriarchal order? Then are we (both men and women) not bound to use men's language (even if this becomes problematical)?

And what of the postmodern malaise of 'dislocation and despair', experienced by the male avant garde?<sup>57</sup> Without feminist intervention does this itself become another master narrative? Another style? Whilst applauding the breakdown of the master narratives of modern man do feminists/women want to (or need to) share in this dilemma? And finally, isn't even the most polemic art still in jeopardy of (re)appropriation and consumption by the all powerful capitalist system?

---

57 Paraphrasing Sarah Kent; also see Craig Owens (1983).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADAMS, Jude, Review of "From the Center, Feminist Essays on Women's Art", Lucy Lippard, Dutton paperback, N.Y. 1976, Lip, 1977, p.54.

ALLOWAY, Lawrence, "Women's Art in the 1970's", Feminist Collage Educating Women in the Visual Arts, edited by Judy Loeb, Teachers College Press 1979, pp.59-77, reprinted from Art and America May-June 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Women's Art and The Failure of Art Criticism", Network, 1984.

BARRY, Judith and FLITTERMAN, Sandy, "Textural Strategies:: The Politics of Art Making", Lip, 1981/1982, pp.29-34, another version printed in Screen, Vol.21, No.2, 1981.

BURKE, Janine, "Sense and Sensibility: Women's Art and Feminist Criticism", Lip, 1978/79, pp.3-5.

CREED, Barbara, "Feminist Film Theory: Reading the Text", Lip, 1982/83, No.7, pp.16-27.

EISENSTEIN, Hester, Contemporary Feminist Thought, George Allen and Unwin, London, Sydney 1984.

EWINGTON, Julie, "Fragmentation and Feminism: The Critical Discourses of Postmodernism", Art and Text, Spring 1982, pp.61-73.

FAURE-WALKER, James and Caryn, "Activity of Criticism, part 2, Interviews with Roberta Smith and Lucy Lippard" (taped at the end of 1974), Studio International, U.K. No.976, Vol.189 (May-June 1975, pp.184-6).

FENELON, Jeanette, "Currents in Criticism", Lip, 1981/1982, pp.47-50.

FOSTER, Hal (ed), The Anti-Aesthetic Essays on Post Modern Culture, Bay Press 1983, Washington, Introduction pp.ix-xvi.

FRUEH, Joanna, "Towards a Feminist Theory of Art Criticism", New Art Examiner, Jan 1984, pp.41-44.

GRACE, Helen, "From the Margins: A Feminist Essay on Women's Art", with apologies to Lucy Lippard, Lip, 1981/1982, pp.13-18.

HONIG FINE, Elsa, Women and Art. a history of Woman Painters and Sculptors from the Renaissance to the 20th Century. Allanheld and Schram/Prior, London 1978.

Lip Editorials, 1976/1984.

LIPPARD, Lucy R., Changing: Essays in Art Criticism, Dutton, New York, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_ "One", Studio International, U.K., Vol.186, No.958, Sept. 1973, pp.102-3.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Two", Studio International, U.K., Vol.186, No.959, Oct. 1973, pp.162-3.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Why Separate Women's Art?", Art and Artists (U.K.), Vol.8, pt.7, Oct. 1973, pp.8-9.

\_\_\_\_\_ From the Centre - feminist essays on women's art, Dutton, New York, 1976.

particularly the following essays:-

1976(a) "Freelancing the Dragon", pp.15-27, reprinted from Art-Rite, No.5, Spring 1974.

(b) "Fragments", pp.61-79, excerpts from various articles and letters by Lippard and others, previously published elsewhere between 1971-1976.

(c) "What is Female Imagery?" pp.80-89, reprinted from Ms, Vol.3, No.11, May 1975.

(d) "The L.A. Woman's Building", pp.96-100, reprinted from Art in America, Vol.62, No.3, May-June 1974.

(e) "Making Up: Role playing and Transformation in Women's Art", pp.101-108, reprinted from Ms, Vol.4, No.4, October 1974, published under the title of "Transformation Art", p.108.

(f) "The Women Artists' Movement - What Next?", pp.139-148, reprinted from the Catalogue of the 9th Biennale de Paris, 1975.

Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change,  
Dutton, New York, 1984.

especially the following essays:-

1984(a) "Issue", pp.123-4, excerpts reprinted from 'Caring: Five Political Artists' in the Women's Issue of Studio International, Fall 1977.

(b) "Issue and Taboo", pp.125-148, reprinted by permission from the catalogue Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists, (London: Institute for Contemporary Arts 1980).

(c) "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970's", pp.149-158 reprinted by permission from Art Journal (Fall-Winter 1980).

(d) "Out of Control: Australian Art on the Left", pp.286-294 reprinted by permission from The Village Voice, Oct. 19, 1982.

MAJEWSKI, Margaret Mary, "Female Art Characteristics: Do They Really Exist? Feminist Collage, Educating Women in the Visual Arts, edited by Judy Loeb; Teachers College Press, 1979, pp.197-200.

OWENS, Craig, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Post Modernism" from The Anti Aesthetic, Essays on Post Modern Culture, edited by Hal Foster, Bay Press 1983, Washington pp.57-82.

PARKER, Roszika, "Feminist Art Practices in 'Women's Images of Men', 'About Time' and 'Issue'", Art Monthly, U.K., No.43, 1981, pp.16-19.

PARKER, Roszika and POLLOCK, Griselda, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology, R&R, London, 1981.

POLLOCK, Griselda, "Vision Voice and Power, Feminist Art History and Marxism", Block 6, 1982, pp.2-21.

RISATTI, Howard, "Lippard's Get the Message Garbled", New Art Examiner, March 1985, The Independent Voice of the Visual Art, pp.44-45.

SANGIA, Helen, "Lippard in Australia", Lip, 1984, pp.79-80, contains quotes from an unpublished interview with Barbara Hall, october 1082.

TICKNER, Lisa, "The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists since 1970", Art History, U.K. Vol.1, pt.2, June 1978, pp.236-251.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Notes on Feminism, Feminity and Women's Art", Lip, 1984, No.8, pp.14-18.

WEYERGRAF, Clare, "The Holy Alliance, Populism and Feminism", October, U.S.A. No.16, Spring 1981, pp.23-34.

WITHERS, Josephine, Women Artists in Washington Collection, January 18 to February 25, 1979, University of Maryland Art Gallery and Women's Caucus for Art, College Park Maryland, pp.9-12.

WOLFF, Janet, The Social Producation of Art, MacMillan, London 1981.

BE WITCH

Notes on 'witches' and related ideas,

pertinent to the development of the

content in my work.

My interest in 'witches' revolved around the notion of the Other. The 'witch' figure stands as a non-conformist, an outsider who is considered to be 'abnormally and malevolently powerful' and consequently unacceptable; described by Mary Douglas as "an archetypal deviant who is associated symbolically with the 'reverse' of normal human life and powers" (Suffling p.5).

### Mask of Morality

William Monter argues that witchcraft was not originally sex-linked, at least in the Jura region in Switzerland. There the term 'witch' derived from the word 'heresy'. Erica Jong also connects heresy with the crime of witchcraft. She cites that heresy according to Thomas Aquinas and canon law was

religious error held in wilful and persistent opposition to the truth after it had been defined and declared by the Church in an authoritative manner. (p.51).

The upholding of this notion, that people could (and should) be executed for what they believed (or failed to believe) as Jong points out "laid the theological foundation for witch hunts" throughout Europe. Witch hunting emphasised 'sameness' and the accusations (Mary Douglas argues) represented moral demands for conformity (further discussed by Suffling p.4). This also permitted 'erasure' of responsibility for the killings (Daly).

The mask of morality can then crucify those who break the taboo with the best conscience and greatest ethical indignation of their personae. (Sorrell p.44).



### Woman as Witch

The Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of Witches) was first published in 1486, then a further 13 editions appeared throughout Europe by 1520, followed by another 16 editions between 1574-1669. This exposition identified women as witches. Seeking to make effective the biblical command of Exodus xxii 18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," the Maleficarum gave rise to a "uniquely lethal form of western European misogyny" (Monter, p.17).

In 1895 Matilda Joslyn Gaye exposed the practice of witch hunting to be the suppression of female autonomy, for example 'wise' women and midwives who lived outside of patriarchal control. Feminist writers such as Mary Daly and Erica Jong have re-examined the witchcraft phenomenon, viewing it as the projection of masculine sexual panic onto woman: the Other, as such the witch became 'a mythic embodiment' both of male and female fear of female autonomy and assertion. (Johnson, p.10).

Leslie Fiedler who sees woman as the 'first other' of patriarchal society, argues that men have constructed the myth of other/stranger/alien:

whenever they are forced to confront creatures disturbingly like themselves in certain respects, who yet do not quite fit (or worse, seem to have rejected) their definition of what it means to be human. Such creatures are defined - depending on whether the defining group conquers or is conquered by them - as superhuman or subhuman, divine or diabolic; and the confrontation with them is rendered in appropriate terms. The Stranger in Shakespeare p.37, (cited Creed 1982/3, p.16)

This brings to mind the fate of Joan of Arc and society's fine line of distinction between saint and witch.

### Power

The feminist critique does not explain why the atrocities occurred at a relatively specific and discrete period in history, while misogyny has existed throughout the centuries. Therefore witch hunts as a form of men's power over women cannot be the sole reason (but is an important factor that is often omitted from discussion and from the majority of historical accounts). Like all major historical events the witch craze had a multiplicity of underlying causes.

The witchcraft issue was absorbed into existing power conflicts (including the battle for sexual domination) throughout Europe. Late medieval and early modern Europe is also characterised by a general period of pestilence, and economic, political, and religious turmoil. And witchcraft itself came to signify a form of behaviour which violated and thus diminished the sovereignty of the extant norms and values; the general suspicion and the prosecution of it by the authorities provided means of reasserting these cherished values (and effected the silencing of opponents).

Recent sociological reasoning has also given currency to the notion that an individual's own emotions and subjectively produced fears could have been projected onto another, finding objective import through the social construction - the witch. (Suffling).

### 'Durability' of the Witch figure

The witch is not dead; she is merely hibernating. And witch-hunting itself is hardly dead; it is merely waiting to be born again under a different name. (Jong, p.39).

The 'witch' as metaphor for victims of social and political control is not extinct. McCarthyism in America in the 1950's, with the political 'witch hunts' of communist suspects exemplifies this. A more recent example which is closer to home, is that of Lindy Chamberlain. In her article "From Fairy to Witch: Imagery and Myth in the Azaria Case" (1984), Dianne Johnson writes:

The imagery which informed the public discourse was peppered with potent illusions to creatures and moods of other times and other places long past. The spectre of Lindy as witch was rarely articulated, yet the notion percolated just beneath the surface, constantly informing the imagery which pervaded the discussion. The discussion surrounding the case clearly illustrates just how deeply the figure of the witch has permeated our cultural forms. The paraphernalia of witchcraft pervades our humour, our art, our literature, our mythologies and our history. (p.91).

The 'witch' is impermeated in our fairytales, childhood stories, images and even our toys; fostering the notion that a person who is a little bit odd, who deviates from the prescribed norms could be a 'witch'.

Nowadays the witch is both seen as 'a figure of fun and a figure of menace' (Jong) and is also known to us through her [his] prominent and persistent presence in Halloween masquerades and carnival celebrations; a setting in which codes can be transgressed, normality can be inverted and where power conflicts can be waged; and where the notion of the Other is also central.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BINDER, Pearl Magic Symbols of the World, Hamlyn, London, N.Y., Sydney, 1972.

BOVENSCHEN, Silvia "The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch and the Witch Myth: The Witch, Subject of the Appropriation of Nature and Object of the Domination of Nature", New German Critique, pp.83-119, No. 15, Fall, 1978.

BRIGGS, Katherine A Dictionary of Fairies, Penguin Books, 1977.

BUNBURY, Stephanie "Witches and thirsty Vampires Rule, OK", Interview with Barbara Creed, The Age, 13/9/1985.

CARTER, Angela Book review of 'Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and culture in early new England', by John Putnam Demos, New Society, 31 March 1983.

COOPER, J.C. An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London 1978.

CREED, Barbara "Feminist Film Theory: Reading the Text", Lip, 1982/83, No.7, pp.16-27.

DALY, Mary "European Witchburnings: Purifying the Body of Christ", Chapter Six of Gyn/Ecology - The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, The Women's Press, 1978, pp.178-222.

EMBER, Carol R. and Melvin Cultural Anthropology, Hunter College of the City University of New York 3rd Ed. Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1981.

FRAZER, Sir James The Golden Bough - a study in Magic and Religion, Abridged Edition, Macmillan & Co., London 1978.

GETTINGS, Fred The Hidden Art - A Study of Occult Symbolism in Art, Studio Vista, London, 1978.

GLOB, P.V. The Bog People - Iron-Age Man Preserved, Trans. by Rupert Bruce Mitford, Cornell Unl. Press, Ithaca, New York, 1969.

HAYMAN, Ronald Arthur Miller - Contemporary Playwriters Series an H.E.B. Paperback, Heinemann Educational Books (1st pub. 1970), 3rd ed., 1977.

JOHNSON, Dianne "From Fairy to Witch: Imagery and Myth in the Azaria Case", Australian Journal of Cultural Studies, Vol.2 No.2, 1984, pp.90-107.

JONG, Erica Witches, Granada, London, Toronto, Sydney, New York, 1982.

MACFARLANE, Alan Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England - A regional and comparative study, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, (1970), 1971.

MILLER, Arthur The Crucible, Penguin Books (Play), 1st Pub. 1953 in USA, 1966.

MONTER, E. William Witchcraft in France and Switzerland - The Borderlands during the Reformation, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1976.

NEWALL, Venetia (ed) The Witch Figure - Folklore essays by a group of scholars in England honouring the 75th birthday of Katharine M. Briggs, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973.

especially the following essays:

"The Jew as a Witch Figure" by Ventia Newall.

"The Witch as Victim" by Geoffrey Parrinder.

"The Witch as a Frightening and Threatening Figure" by John Widdowson.

OPIE, Iona and Peter The Classic Fairy Tales, Oxford Uni. Press, 1974.

O'DEA, Thomas F. The Sociology of Religion, Foundation of Modern Sociology Series, Columbia Uni., Prentice-Hall Inc. New Jersey 1966.

POPE, Robert G. Book Review of "Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England" by John Demos (1982), Labor History, Vol.26, No.2, Spring 1985, pp.298-9.

ROBBINS, Russell Hope Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, Newnes Books (1st Pub. 1959), 1984.

SEBALD, Hans Witchcraft, The Heritage of a Heresy, Elsevier, New York, Oxford, 1978.

SUFFLING, Pamela Witchcraft and the Circumvention of Paradox: A causal and comparative analysis. Occasional Paper No.3, Department of Sociology, University of Tasmania, 1985.

VALMAN, Nur "Magic" entry form International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol.9, pp.521-528 edited by David Stills, The MacMillan Co. and The Free Press, 1968.

#### From Newspapers

"Orgasm Rather than Dinner ... A look of Witches and Christians", Togartus, Vol.LVI, No.2, Uni. of Tas. newspaper reprinted from Age 26/12/84 and previously from Der Spiegel.

SEMINAR PAPER II

THE MOMENT OF CARNIVAL

Presented: 9 July 1986.

- an investigation of carnivalesque discourse

in the past and at the moment.





Fig.1 Carnival at a court of the Middle Ages. Illustration from a 14th Century novel, France.

### THE LETTER "C"

"Ah yes, C is for 'crack-up' for 'cut up', 'circularity', 'contradiction', collage', 'codes', 'categories; and 'closure' (a word with many uses but ranks as one of the baddies ...)

...  
 "C is also for 'carnival' (those ritual periods of reversal when the King becomes the Fool and the Fool becomes the King ...)" (Megan Cronly: 1986: p.232)

And so writes Megan Cronly, in her witty article 'The A-Z of Postmodernism'. From amongst the ranks of this fashionable, and useful jargon one can find 'carnival' and 'carnavalesque discourse' with their associated ideas.

Indicative of this current interest in the 'carnavalesque' is the October-December 1985, (Vol.19) edition of Art and Text entitled "Masques" and the earlier inclusion of Kateryna Arthur's article, "Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Carnival" in Art and Text Spring 1983 (see pp.48-53).

Arthur deals with both the transposition of the term 'carnival' from the history book into the theoretical text; and their inherent contradictory characteristics. I intend to navigate a similar path drawing from the work of historians and anthropologists before focusing on the 'carnival' employed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva.

In looking at the historical event it is with apprehension of not being sufficiently firm or correct. At best 'traces of the present' will be located in the past, in a Foucaultian manner;<sup>1</sup> at worst I will subside into 'the teleological fallacy' (M.I. Finley). (I fear the pending possibility of this since this attitude pervaded much of my education).

---

1 See R. Horne (1985) on Foucault, p.33.

'The teleological fallacy', M.I. Finley writes

"...(consists in assuming the existence from the beginning of time, so to speak, of the writers values ... and in then examining all earlier thought and practice as if they were, or ought to have been, on the road to this realisation".<sup>2</sup>

My initial interest in carnival broadened from thematic concerns of masks and masquerade to embrace its structural significance as well.

#### THE FOOL AND THE KING - INVERSION, TRANSITION AND LIMINALITY

In his book Carnival in Romans, the historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie describes carnival as a public celebration which marks a transition - the eve of Lent. Carnival like many other ritual processes is clearly demarcated - framed or bracketed-off from everyday life. The participants step into another reality - one which is detached or displaced; one which is temporary. Symbolic transitions were made by the people by means of masquerade, play-acting, role-reversals, special food and dances. Popular carnivalesque images of inversion have been recorded in

- medieval engravings and pamphlets and paintings,
- the traveller pulling the stage coach,
- the goose putting the cook in the pot, and the sick healing the doctor.

(see Ladurie, 1979)

2 M.I. Finley, Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology, (London 1980), p.17, cited R. Horne (1985). I am indebted to Rob Horne's article.

Another reversal throughout medieval carnival was that of the Fool and the King which Megan Cronly points out. This custom dates back to the Saturnalias of Roman antiquity where slaves were set free for the seven days of the festival.<sup>3</sup> Both roles and clothes were exchanged with their masters along with the right to criticize and ridicule. Even the highest ranking officials participated in this exchange. A mock king was elected to rule the insane, upside down world which symbolized the idyllic Golden Age of Saturn when men were equal. The festival ended with the actual execution of the substitute king. Saturnalias were reported to have been celebrated as late as the 4th century A.D. in remote regions of the Roman Empire. Similar rituals were retained in the carnival celebrated through the Christian era. Though, even by the establishment of the Roman republic, effigies generally replaced the substitute king for the ritual sacrifice.

Arnold Van Gennep's paradigm of ritual 'the rites of passage' has influenced the examination of carnival by many historians and anthropologists including Ladurie.

Van Gennep proposed a tripartite movement in space-time

1. separation from daily life,
2. a period of transition or liminality , and
3. incorporation or reaggregation back into normal social praxis.

Anthropologist, Victor Turner felt that sharp symbolic inversions of social attributes and elevation of status may characterise separation from daily life, while the blurring and merging of distinctions may characterize liminality (i.e. transition) (see Turner, 1982 p.26).

---

<sup>3</sup> See Orloff (1981).





Fig.2 The Procession of Bacchus, 17th Century engraving.

Van Gennep's liminality is best described by Turner

"a moment when those being moved in accordance to a cultural script were liberated from normative demands, when they were, indeed betwixt and between successive lodgements in jural political systems. In this gap between ordered worlds almost anything can happen." (Drama 1973: p.13; cited Haplin, 1983: p.29)

In carnival, the liminal phenomena tended to be a collective passage of public art, concerned with calendrical, biological, social-structural rhythms, or with crises in social processes; (whether these result from internal adjustments or external adaptations or remedial measures (Turner)). Thus they appear in the natural breaks in the flow of natural and social processes.<sup>4</sup>

During liminality the normative social order is suspended or turned upside down; chaos breaks through into cosmos, disorder into order. An ambiguous state exists but by way of compensation, whether implicitly or explicitly the usual social structure is defined, but also shown as convention (see Turner, 1982: p.27). Whether people believe or pretend to believe that such transformations are real is irrelevant. How people appear and act as Marjorie Haplin points out is more important (see (1983) p.219). Action reinforces acceptance; but it is also true as Turner stressed that many acts (both public and private) express and fulfill purposes and goals, both conscious and unconscious.

---

4 The Liminaloid: Based on distinctions between work, play and leisure (applicable mostly to Industrial societies), Turner further distinguishes between liminal rituals in which one is obliged to participate, and the liminoid period in which one chooses to participate. Turner argues that one participates in carnival more by choice than obligation; and he therefore places carnival in the liminoid bracket unlike tribal initiation ceremonies. I feel that this distinction is not crucial to the essay in hand. Given that one bears in mind that the reference to liminality in the theoretical text (and art) is metaphorical and is also participated in by choice; and that this produces a tendency for the liminoid activity to become a self-reflexive and intellectual process.

### BINARY AND PLURAL OPPOSITIONS

V.V. Ivanov posits a theory of carnival as the inversion of bipolar opposites. Rather than disorder he argues that another hierarchical order is established during carnival by the inversion of the norms. In the vein of structural anthropology and within the constraints of their formal syntax-like rules, Ivanov reads the ultimate purpose of carnival to be a striving for equilibrium between and unification of binary opposites by mediation between them (see Ivanov, 1984).

But this theory does not account for the violent outbursts and killing known to carnival. Alexander Orloff lists the carnivals of Rome as the most orgiastic and violent. Fighting, crimes of vengeance, even murder and rape were common. Many vendettas against political leaders were settled by assassination during the liminal phase.

Turner maintains, that moving out of the normal cultural positions creates an interval - however brief when 'everything trembles in balance' (1982: p.44). This may be no more than "a subversive flicker" (p.44) which is immediately put in the service of the hegemony.

Tribal, agrarian and pre-industrial societies tend to have simple ying-yang or 'natural' binary oppositions; for example male/female, land/sea, positive/negative; their main social and cultural structures tending to be modelled on these and similar cosmological principles (see Turner 1982: p.29). The liminal phases of tribal and agrarian rituals usually serve to affirm the values of the status quo. Through paradox and shock members of a community are shown that chaos is the alternative to cosmos 'so they'd better stick to cosmos' (Turner).



In contrast, Turner contends that larger, more complex, post industrial societies and in turn their symbolic systems and genres should be viewed differently. With gradual urbanization, European carnival moved from a purely agrarian phenomenon. Conflicts on the political, practical and symbolic levels were incorporated into the long established existential content (seasonal, and agricultural, the end of winter and birth of a new year).

European carnival by the 16th Century, Ladurie remarks, represented a sort of comprehensive description of society, neighbourhoods, professions, age groups (the young and old), males and females and so forth. Different factions of highly diversified groups inevitably implying social conflict.

In such complex societies the 'betwixt and between' of carnival does not merely consist of inversed binary oppositions. As Ladurie argues it embodies the 'symbolic' parading of differences and injustices; plural and heterogeneous in nature.

"Embracing so many elements made carnival particularly apt as an instrument of social change... which was slow but undeniable in 16th Century towns successively shaken by the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the counter-Reformation." (Ladurie, 1979: p.272)

Popular festivities and social change do not always go hand in hand. Inversion and subversion are not always synonymous, and Ladurie warns us of this. Though undeniably at times the two are seen together.'

'WOMEN ON TOP'<sup>5</sup>

Carnival provided women as well as other oppressed groups an opportunity for social elevation from their downgraded status. Natalie Davis examines the role of women in 19th Century French carnival in her essay 'Women on Top'.

This sexual reversal or elevation, Davis extolls "keep open alternative ways of conceiving family power structures" (p.130) and subsequently assigns women a role as social critic rather than object of control.

It is interesting to note that the ancient Greek cult of Bacchus (the God of Wine) according to Bertrand Russell embraced a 'curious element of feminism' (1961: p.35). Where respectable matrons and maids (to the annoyance but not opposition of their husbands) spent whole nights dancing in ecstasy intoxicated partly by alcohol but mostly by mysticism.

Ironically the women of Cologne in the 1880's started the Weiber fasnacht or women's carnival as a feminist protest against the now exclusively male domination of the modern event. (Modern carnival in part being traceable to the cult of Bacchus).

---

5 'Women on Top' is the title of an essay by Natalie Zemon Davis published in Society and Culture in Early Modern France, (Stanford Uni Press, USA, 1965) (source Arthur 1983: p.49).

### ATTACK FROM WITHIN

Ladurie's book examines the Carnival of 1580 in the French town, Romans where the traditional ludic festivities, developed into active political struggles and ended in a 'bloody ambush'.

A Romans ruling party diarist in the 16th Century proclaimed that it was the authorities who "put forth an upside down vision, the better to dissipate subversion through amusement."<sup>6</sup>

Thus Carnival at Romans was an officially sanctioned event and so the Romans Rebellion of 1580 constituted an attack upon the law from within the law.

Kateryna Arthur describes the liminal period of carnival as

"contradictory and paradoxical in nature, as both agent of official culture and revolutionary force, as deeply ritualistic and yet explosively unpredictable ... as playful and high seriousness." (p.49)

Julia Kristeva once wrote (which she has since negated); that carnival's law breaking was ineffectual

"...no one feels threatened: the carnival always took place on the steps of the church" (Ruin of a Poetics, cited Arthur 1983: p.51)

However this was not the case. People were threatened.

---

6 Quoted by Ladurie (cited Arthur, 1983: p.49).



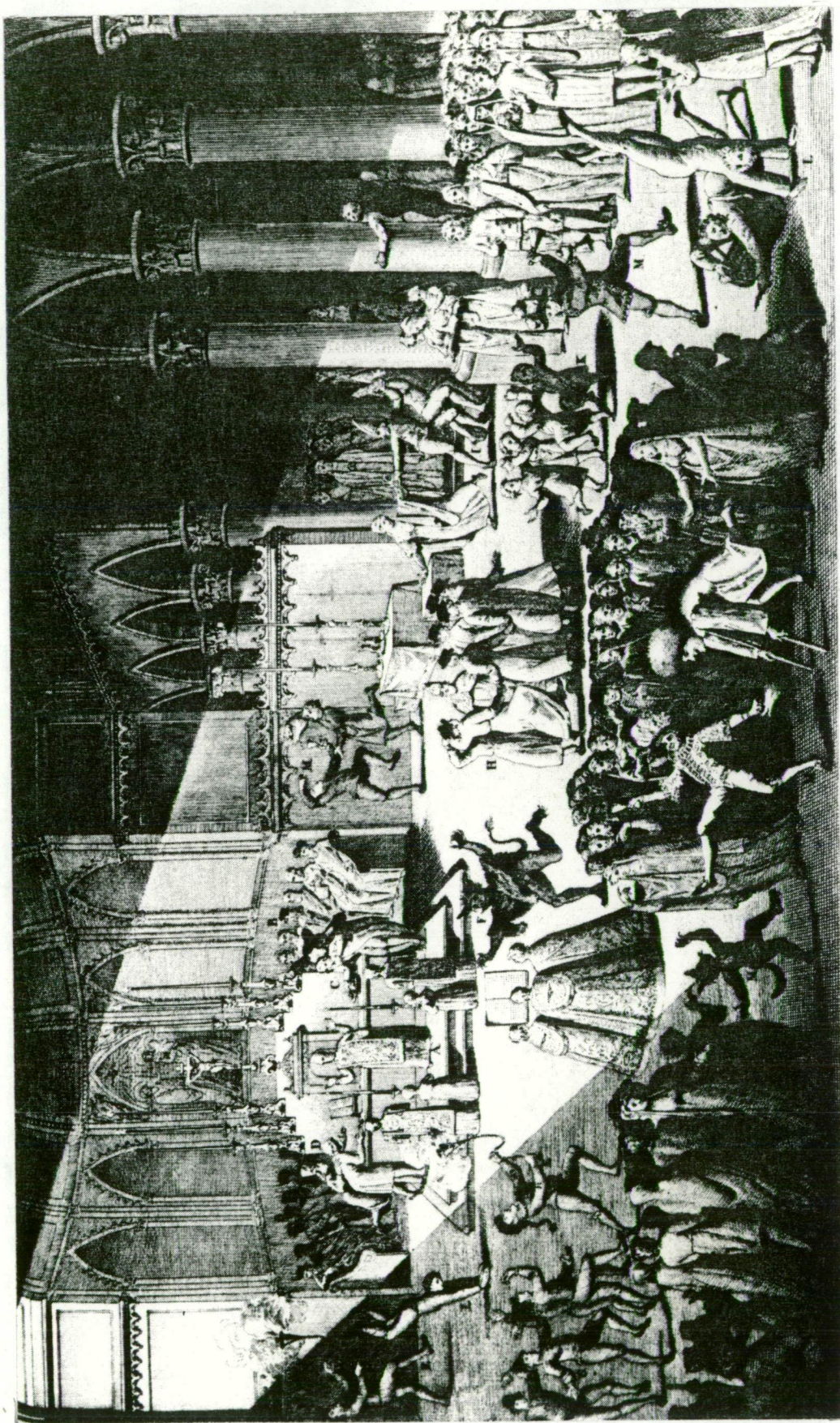


Fig.3 Festival of Fools, France 1743.



### THE FEAST OF FOOLS

During the Middle Ages, even while the Popes waged their holy war on paganism, the spirit of carnival infiltrated the Church, manifested as the fool. In this 'bizarre ecclesiastical celebration' (Orloff, 1980: p.32), held over the 12 days of Christmas the lower clergy and monks elected a 'Fool's Pope' or 'Abbot of Unreason'; and made mockery of solemn Christian liturgy. Umberto Eco argues that this parody was only enjoyable because the sacraments were believed and revered throughout the rest of the year.

If this is so, and the feast of fools actively reinforced and legitimated the official Christian dogma, why then did the Church make repeated and concerted efforts, often in vain to suffocate these and other festivities? Rather than questioning the essential tenets of the Christian doctrine, was it because the earthly hierarchy of the Church was overturned by the carnival? If so, is this festival comparable to the challenge to the forms of the established church in the Reformation? Perhaps this situation relates to the point Julia Kristeva made about the anti-theological rather than anti-mystical nature of carnival.

Pope Innocent III at the end of the 12th Century condemned the celebrations as blasphemous and as a shameful desecration of the holy place and rites. Three hundred years on the Church was still condemning the Festival of Fools.

Mikhail Bakhtin maintains that the laughter of medieval carnival and the feast of fools were sharply distinct from the serious official ecclesiastic, feudal and political cult forms and ceremonials (see p.5). The comic was no longer part of sacred ritual, as it is in many tribal societies.

'BATTLE OF THE GODS' - THE IDEOLOGY OF GOOD AND EVIL<sup>7</sup>

The origin of carnival is unknown but much debated. An ancient pagan festivity, already having been celebrated by the Greeks around 1,000BC. By the Middle Ages Alexander Orloff sees carnival as the site for the 'battle of the Gods'.

"The beginning of the Christian era turned Europe into a whirlpool of converging myths, legends, cults and religions which streamed over the continent with the conquering Roman legions. Osiris and Isis, Dionysus, Saturnus, Attis and Cybele, Demeter, Lupus and the Faunus - all of these blended with the cult traditions of the Celts, Saxons, the Teutonic, Germanic and Scandinavian peoples. The great similarities of all their mythic cosmologies made them naturally compatible, and the various local and imported cults flourished." (Orloff, 1980 p.31)

The colonising drive of Christianity strove to become the master code, replacing pagan beliefs with their own (at times, even by the force of sword, witch-hunting and Inquisition).

Able to dominate but unable to completely eradicate persistent heathen excesses, the Church contended for the 'ownership' of carnival; spreading over it a "rather transparent liturgical veneer" (Orloff: p.31).

New trappings for the ancient rites with Christian significations came into being. We have only to think of Halloween (which was renamed All Saints Day) and the ancient Celtic fire festivals held to ward off dead spirits, ghosts and witches; today synonymous with 'trick and treat' children's games and American pumpkins.

---

<sup>7</sup> The phrase 'battle of the Gods' in reference to carnival was coined by Orloff 1981 (see p.31).

Saints days were imposed on local gods and calendar adjustments were made so that the Christian version of the death and resurrection myth could be anchored to the transitional winter to spring cycle of festivities.<sup>8</sup> Carnival became the transitional period of cleansing, the purging of one's pagan ways before Lent. The logical prelude to its opposite, fasting, preaching and atonement. The period of restoration of jeopardized normal order culminating in baptism at Easter and spiritual rebirth.<sup>9</sup>

Carnival's King of Folly - (usually an effigy) becomes the scapegoat for the excess and sins of carnival. His trial and execution signifies the return to rules governing ordinary time.

The only aspect of carnival that Christianity may legitimately lay first claim to is the term 'carnival' itself. Most linguistic evidence suggests that the term stems from the Latin 'carne levare' meaning the 'putting away of' or 'farewell' to 'flesh' (i.e. meat).<sup>10</sup>

Yet despite the Church's appropriation and rationalizing in its quest for dominance; "Carnival's pre-Lenten yet anti-Lent functions made it antithetic to the ascetic values of Christianity" (Ladurie, 1979: p.285). Christianity is based on the concept of sin and salvation. Dichotomies between the serious and the ludic, prudence and passion, good and evil are stressed, with the former being valued - deeming some

8 Sir James Frazer in his book The Golden Bough, documents the bitter controversy between similarities of the pagan and Christian passions reported by an anonymous Christian in the 4th Century AD. Christians "...admitted, indeed that in point of time Christ was the junior deity, but they triumphantly demonstrated his [Christ's] seniority by falling back on the subtlety of Satan who on so important an occasion had surpassed himself by inverting the usual order of time". p.361.

9 Easter is by far the most important festival on the Christian calendar which is considered to overshadow the events of carnival.

10 Some etymologists contend that the word is derived from the ship on wheels, "carrus navalis", central to so many of the antique and medieval rites. (Orloff, 1980: p.37). Monica Rector also discusses the etymology of the word.





Fig.4 The battle of Carnival and Lent, Peter Brueghel 1559.



things to be permitted while others prohibited. The Church imposed bans at various times throughout Europe prohibiting masking and disguise (also left overs from pagan celebrations) but these bans were often ignored.<sup>11</sup> In contempt of the Church's prohibitions and restrictions the people of Basel in Switzerland held their carnival (or Fasnacht) during Lent.

#### MISRULE FOR A REASON - THE ORDER-DISORDER CONTINUUM

Anthropologist, Brian Sutton-Smith argues that we are disorderly in games (and gives the example of the English children's game ring-a-ring-a-rosie); and by extension Victor Turner posits that we are disorderly in carnival, halloween masking etc. for one of two reasons.

The first reason being that we are suffering from an 'overdose of order' and want to 'let off steam'. In the 15th Century the faculty of Theology in Paris pronounced such a view. In carnival:

"We act thus in jest and not seriously ... so that the foolishness innate in us can flow out ... and evaporate. Do not wineskins and barrels burst if their bungs are not loosened once in a while?"<sup>12</sup>

11 Masks have been employed to personify gods, caricature one's enemies, conceal identity both reinforce social order and provide protection when violating social taboos. "The complete 'perversion' of the mask in Europe came with the so-called 'masks of shame'. Women who had been accused of being witches were forced to wear these masks at their trial, so that they already personified the evil of which they were accused. Such masks have been preserved in Salzburg (Austria), for instance." (Lommel, 1972: p.200).

12 Quoted by N. Davis in "The Reason for Misrule", Society and Culture, p.102; (cited Arthur 1983: p.49).

This is both the traditional and conservative view. According to Sutton-Smith the second contrary reason is simply that we have something to learn through being disorderly.

### KEEPING OPEN ALTERNATIVES

The transitional period of carnival where the equilibrium of normal social structure is temporarily dissolved may include subversive and ludic (playful) events. The latent potential of alternatives through novel, grotesque recombinations of cultural factors prevails. (Though this too could be a source for further buttressing of the norms). Factors or elements of culture are isolated in so far as it is possible, signified by multivocal symbols (i.e. each containing many meanings) and recombined in numerous ways. Victor Turner notes that recombination will often occur in grotesque ways.

"grotesque because they are arranged in terms of possible or fantasised rather than experienced combinations ... elements of the familiar are defamiliarized when arranged in unprecedented combinations. (1982, p.27)

Such rearrangements, displacements and contradictions prompt speculation, reflection and reconsideration of the order of things.

In Hannah Arendt's words:

"everything stable is set in motion and rendered open to question ... [undermining] all established criteria, values, measurements for good and evil" (quoted by Babcock, 1984: p.105)

New models, symbols and paradigms which arise in such liminal settings, Sutton-Smith claims to be "the seed beds of cultural activity" and the possibility arises of these being absorbed back into the normal economic and politico-legal domains. Where liminal recombinations are limited to mere hierarchical inversion, Turner contends that we are seeing the intrusion of normative social structure into what is potentially a free and experimental area of culture. Recombination in every permutation - however weird should be possible.

Other cultural sites, such as the literary text, art work and even the art galleries (like carnival) could be considered to constitute liminal settings which contain both the possibility of feeding alternative models, symbols and ideas back into the normative social structures or further buttressing of existing codes and meanings. Turner, Ladurie, Davis and Orloff all acknowledge carnival's potential to, in the words of Kateryna Arthur "radically disturb the social text which sanctions and contains it" (p.49). But it is Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian Marxist, who takes this aspect into the realms of literary theory in his books Rabelais and His World and the Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Following in this vein is Julia Kristeva with her exposition "Word, Dialogue and Novel".

In his 'masterful' study of Francois Rabelais' comedy Gargantua and Pantagruel, Bakhtin explores

"uncharted depths of popular culture, ... [finding] ... an even more pervasive and profoundly embedded dialectic in the medieval mentalite." (Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, Saints and Society, 1982: p.100)

Bakhtin writes:

Rabelais ..."summoned all the resources of sober popular imagery in order to break up official lies and the narrow seriousness dictated by the ruling classes." (1984: p.439)

Noting that this work was written at the height of Stalinism, Arthur extolls that it too was driven by the 'spirit of carnival' (p.49).

Within the history of marxist criticism Terry Eagleton ranks Bakhtin's endeavours as perhaps the 'boldest' and 'most devious gesture' within the history of marxist criticism (cited Arthur p.49).

Bakhtin focuses primarily of the 'heterogeneous and explosive pluralism of moments of carnival'. Frederic Jameson suggests that the profusion of conflicting religious or political sects surfacing in the English 1640's and Soviet 1920's exemplifies such moments (1982: p.84). It has been drawn to my attention that a group like The Levellers (active in England during the Puritan Revolution) could serve as an example of this; the idea of the 1640 revolution as a kind of carnival (though not expressed in these terms) was first outlined by Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down.

Unperturbed by political restrictions and Soviet bans on certain kinds of laughter, self-irony and satire, Bakhtin continues the work of Russian formalists, at the same time attempting to breakthrough their technical rigor.

### THE FREEDOM OF LAUGHTER

Bakhtin celebrates the laughter of Carnival and of Rabelais, heralding its profound subversive power and its "indissoluble and essential relation to freedom ... relative freedom of course" (p.89). Umberto Eco, presents a different picture in his persuasive essay "The Frames of Comic Freedom". Eco denies that the laughter of carnival has the power to effect real transgressions and is consequently an irrelevant mode.

This laughter can only ever function as an instrument of social control; never as a form of social criticism. His whole argument hinges on definitions of comedy and tragedy derived from (pseudo) Aristotelian Poetics (these being based on Aristotle's ideas of unity and formal, causal logic) and Eco relegates carnival to the domain of the 'comic'. Eco's comic frame by definition always employs the social norms to ridicule the deviant; never permitting unlike humor the transgressor power to deride these codes. The relationship between the rule and the violator being differently balanced. In short, for Eco, the 'comic' laughs at the violation. Whereas 'humour' smiles when one understands why the violation has taken place, then,

"...we are no longer sure that it is the character who is at fault.  
Maybe the frame is wrong." (Eco, 1984: p.8)

But Bakhtin's carnivalesque laughter is different. His laughter is not directed to an isolated negative aspect of reality, but against all reality; all social codes, the finite world as a whole, turning it into something 'other'. The sovereignty and solemnity of our meanings is ruptured by the laughter; the fissures in our 'fixed' and finite world is exposed.

Too often in contemporary society, carnival, Kristeva points out, is taken to be synonymous with a parodic strengthening of law; blotting out its inherent dramatic and revolutionary readings. Carnival is at once comic and tragic (or serious) and as such

"it can avoid becoming either the scene or law of the scene of its parody in order to become the scene of its other" (Kristeva, 1980: p.80)

Carnival embraces the festive laughter of all the people rather than individual private reactions. It is directed at every one, including the carnival participants. Those who laugh are not placed above the object of mockery and are not opposed to it.

Bakhtin stresses its positive, regenerating power and not solely a negative character (like modern parody in formalist literature).

For Victor Turner, like Bakhtin "ambiguity reigns" (1984: p.22), Carnival's comedy contains potential for both conservative control and radical skepticism. For Bakhtin, laughter signifies a simultaneous acceptance and protest; triumph and mockery; destruction and regeneration. In some ways Eco's definition of 'humor' is akin to Bakhtinian carnival. The action of both obliges us to acknowledge the existence of the prevailing system of values without accepting it - allowing the opportunity to cast doubt over such sets of codes.

However Eco argues that Carnival does so by breaking the normative frame, that is, by moving into the betwixt and between interval. A period which he reads as promising and hankering after an impossible freedom. The freedom to perform within the liminal frame of carnival Marjorie Haplin suggests is itself an act of





*Nadie se conoce*

Fig.5 "No one recognizes anyone", Fransisco Goya, from the series of etchings, "Los Caprichos", 1798.



commitment to the extant social order. Both the frame (i.e. the liminal phase) and the freedom within it are illusions.

But it is exactly this aspect which Bakhtin seizes upon. Kateryna Arthur explains it in this way:

"Carnival is a fiction, an untruth which turns the tables upon official truth or law by exposing - its fictionality". (1983: p.50)

Normality is seen to be convention. According to Bakhtin this exposure itself constitutes a challenge to the law. The carnival laughter signifies the recognition of the relativity of the prevailing cultural script; of everything. Fractured - is its 'sealed illusion' of unity and completeness, opened up is the possibility of change.

Julia Kristeva likens the carnivalesque laughter to a kind of distorting mirror turned upon officialdom which discloses the relativity of law whether it be linguistic, religious, sexual or more widely cultural.

Carnival's violation of prohibitions insemminates potential process of 'destructive genesis' (Kristeva).

#### BECOMING GROTESQUE

The Grotesque bodily image can be found amongst the wealth of metaphors and images in Rabelaisian carnival. Bakhtin adopts this image as metaphor for 'the

becoming' that transitional, liminal phase of carnival - where almost anything can happen.

Never finished, never completed, the grotesque body itself is in the process of "becoming". Unlike the official canons promulgated over the last four hundred years which has presented the body as entirely finished.

Of the official representations Bakhtin writes:

"That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts or branches off (when a body transgresses its limits and a new one begins) is eliminated, hidden, or moderated. All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable facade. The opaque surface and the body's "valleys" acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. All attributes of the unfinished world are carefully removed ..." (Bakhtin, 1984: p.320, also quoted by Arthur, 1983: p.80)

For Bakhtin comic - grotesque images prevalent in carnival and Rabelias' writings reflects: "a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming" (p.24).


It creates an ambivalence, the linking of beginnings and ends; the old and the new, body and world. Closure is eliminated as oppositions join in a continuum of perpetual change and instability. Dissimilar is the structuralist theory of carnival as unification and equilibrium of polar opposites. The Grotesque body metaphor, as Kateryna Arthur reads,

"permits change, interchange, inter orientation. Relationship is not just a possibility but a condition of the body's existence". (p.50)

The significance of this metaphor goes beyond the thematic into that of structure. The inherent features of carnival play an integral part in Bakhtin's literary theories

#### ABSENCE OF GOD AND THE RELATIVITY OF LAW

In some literature and in some art (as in carnival) multiple and shifting vantage points and the flux of relationships shed new light on the familiar order of things. And Bakhtin implies, that this in fact enables escape from this order.

Bakhtin's literary studies,  dealing with novelistic polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia investigates narrative as a carnivalistic mode. Opening up possibility to contest and undermine the dominant codes, in the same way that carnival opposes official culture. Focusing on Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin formulates the notion of polyphony and the dialogical "as a rupture of the one-dimensional text of bourgeois narrative, as a carnivalesque dispersal of the hegemonic order of a dominant culture" (Frederic Jameson, 1982: p.285)

Polyphony refers to the existence of a variety of ideological voices, where each voice is allowed free play to do battle with each other, free of a fixed hierarchy. The polyphonic narrative exists in Arthur's words as "an open system of relations rather than as a closed set of representations" (p.51). Related to this, is Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and its multiplicity of styles. Heteroglossia refers to "the multitude of variables that govern the life of any utterance, contextualizing it" (Arthur p.51).

Polyphony, Janet Wolff writes:

"...has been hailed as an important advance in the deconstruction of entrenched ideological forms of literature and the starting point for radicalism in art." (1981: p.128)

The importance of the polyphonic novel (including writings by Dostoevsky, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf), Janet Wolff remarks

"is that it recognises the complexity of the modern world, the dialogical nature of human consciousness, and the 'profound ambiguity' (Bakhtin) of every voice, gesture and act" (1981: p.128)

Polyphony depends on a dialogical structure, one which forbids finality or closure. Bakhtin, and also Kristeva refers us back to Socratic dialogue and Menippean discourse as prototypes for this carnivalistic mode.<sup>13</sup> In Dialogism, symbolic relationships, analogy and oppositions take precedence over substance, identity and causality connections, challenging faith in Aristotelian logic (see Kristeva, p.72).

In the carnivalesque mode, eluded is the single and simple closure of meaning authorised by an absolute point of view. Dispersed is the myth of the unilinear and unified Aristotelian logic of development through which the author's consciousness and knowledge has only to recognize and represent in the text. Exposed is this monologism of the epic, historical discourse, scientific discourse, the

<sup>13</sup> Socratic Dialogue adopted in antiquity by Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, Aecshines, Phaedo, Euclid and others but known to us only through Plat and Zenophon, adopted the defiant structure of the carnivalesque scene and the Socratic process of dialogically revealing truth (i.e. meaning), as well as the structure of a recorded dialogue framed by narrative (see Kristeva, 1980: p.81).

Menippean discourse takes its name from Menippus of Gadara, a philosopher of 3rd Century BC, the existence of his satires are known to us through the writings of Diogenes Laertius. The Romans in the 1st Century BC used this type of genre widely although it appeared much earlier in the writings of various Greeks of antiquity (see Kristeva 1980: p.82).

law, Definition and God. Transgressed are their subsequent prohibitions and negated are their representations.

An optimistic theory indeed. Kristeva states that dialogism with its correlation of 'signs' in a linguistic network (like carnival) infers a 'becoming'. Kristeva, interested in Bakhtin's ideas of the word as a minimal unit of the text and its productive simplicity, discusses the ambivalence of words. Words which have two significations; where two sign systems intersect retaining the old/previous meaning while also gaining a new meaning. In a post-structuralist vein the signifier is liberated from the tyranny of the signified - in opposition to the "authoritarian word".

Kristeva:

"the sign as double ... is exteriorized in the actual organization of poetic discourse on the level of textual, literary occurrence ...

... within dialogical signifier(s)

"The signifier represents the subject for another signifier" (Lacan)"  
(p.74)

Related to this carnivalesque notion and from within the miscellaneous genre of comedy would be the 'pun'. It also alludes to more than one signified for one signifier. The humor is generated by puzzling - what is signified? The constant oscillation, as one can never settle on a single meaning. Perhaps this is reminiscent of the way in which the multi-layering of references in poetical language and allegorical art generates meaning?

Kristeva elicits the most subversive elements perhaps over-optimistically from Bakhtinian carnival, attributing them more political and social potency whether in

the festive event or the literary or critical text - 'a practical philosophy doing battle against idealism ... theology against law" (p.83-4)

"Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law." (Kristeva, 1980: p.52)

Kristeva furthers the author-text relationship. An intertextuality of relations is embraced by Bakhtin's literary paradigm - allowing consideration of subject matter of a text, the subject - addressee relationship and the text's relationship with other texts (i.e. with history, with society).

Kristeva argues that carnivalesque discourse, being dialogical is composed of distances, relationships, analogies and non-exclusive oppositions and this permits two texts to intersect; contradicting and relativizing each other.

"It is a spectacle, but without a stage; a game, but also a daily undertaking; a signifier but also a signified ... ...A carnival participant is both actor and spectator: he loses his sense of individuality ... and splits into a subject of 'the spectacle and an object of the game. Within the carnival, the subject is reduced to nothingness, while the structure of the author emerges as anominity that creates and sees itself as created as self and other, as man and mask" (Kristeva, 1980: p.78)

As Kateryna Arthur describes it, Kristeva sees the writer in a double existence of 'acteur/auteur' - reintroducing unity into Bakhtin's theory of perpetual change and instability and the complete fragmentation (beyond recognition) of 'I' in the polyphonic narrative.

Kristeva goes on: the scene of carnival "where there is no stage, no 'theatre', is thus both stage and 'life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle. ... proffered as the only space ... where prohibition (representation, 'monologism') and their

transgression (dream, body, 'dialogism') coexist ... where discourse attains "potential infinity" (quoting David Hibert's term) (Kristeva, 1980: p.79).

Extremely optimistic is this outlook – though still remaining a potential avenue for political action. Whilst being vulnerable (or even prone) to appropriation by the hegemonic order, the carnivalesque mode (whether in the festival or in the written or visual text) nevertheless provides the site of struggle; the site for the parading of potential alternatives of oppositional ideologies.

#### THE MOMENT OF CARNIVAL

Both Kristeva and Bakhtin draw upon 'the moment of carnival' rather than the regular calendrical or institutionally organized occurrence within the year.

The carnival mode expresses distrust, dissatisfaction and opposition; it invites speculation and criticism. Neither Bakhtin nor Kristeva claim that the prevailing ideologies and structures can simply be erased and fundamentally altered. They acknowledge that the role of carnival and its related theoretical mode is antagonistic and in fact needs the existing hegemonic order to define the carnivalesque as 'other'.

Bakhtin stresses that dialogical relationships are totally impossible without logical and concrete semantic relationships, but are in no way reducible to them, they have their own specificity.<sup>14</sup>

14 Paraphrasing Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp.151–2, (cited Kristeva 1980: p.67).



Danger of the status quo consuming the carnivalistic readings into legitimation of itself is an all too possible outcome. Perhaps it is worth considering Victor Turner's 'social drama' paradigm.<sup>15</sup>

This involves a public breach in the normal working of a society (whether it be a grave transgression of a code of manners, a passionate act of violence or a cool, calculated political act designed to contest and undermine the prevailing power structure). Once antagonisms are out in the open inevitably different groups of a society take sides pushing such a breach into crisis. Those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo (likely e.g. the lawmakers, judges, priests, etc.) attempt to implement redressive machinery, be it judicial, ritual or whatever.

Michel Foucault has done much study into the nature of power structures from which to draw upon<sup>16</sup>. He points out that the kind of power that operates in our society tends to be repressive; particularly supressing "useless energies, the intensity of pleasures and irregular modes of behaviour" (1978: p.9).

Michael Holquist referring to Bakhtin's studies of medieval carnival indicates that there is

"... no doubt that the give-and-take between the medieval church/state nexus on the one hand and the carnival on the other was a very real power struggle" (Bakhtin, 1984, prologue p.xxi)

Censorships, denials and other negative elements are component parts which play a local and tactical role in the transformation of power into social discourse and cultural forms and institutions.

15 Turner's paradigm is active in different societies and between differing classifactory oppositions in some way or other.

16 See Foucault's History of Sexuality (1978), and Madness and Civilization (1967).

Carnival's subversive power lies in its disclosure of order as arbitrary and convention.

As Foucault writes:

"power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms ... secrecy ... is indispensable to its operation." (Foucault, 1978: p.86)

Thus carnivalesque discourse constitutes an essentially polemic and subversive strategy.

The 'natural', 'divine', 'enduring' laws (and prohibitions) are revealed as instruments of hegemonic power. The theoretical privilege of law is broken permitting carnival participants to view both the law and their position within it as relative; unfinished; open to change.

The participant or author is situated within the text and context, acknowledging the complexities and ambiguities of the world.

Marginalized cultures have opportunity of a polemic and subversive dialectic with the hegemonic ideology which would otherwise be denied them.

The Carnavalesque, Arthur proposes and Janet Wolff infers, lends itself to a general mode of reading. Monological cultural scripts (be they literary, art or otherwise) are to be read dialogically to draw out hidden aspects and contradictions in content and form. In other words, uncovering the heterogeneous in the monolithic.

### THE LETTER 'P'

We have seen that 'P' is for polyphony, paradigm, and power which all are possibly problematic. But the letter 'P' is also for perhaps.

Perhaps the carnivalesque strategy extends beyond the scope of this paper; touching on the current cultural and debate which hold currency within visual art practice. For instance the modernist/post modernist debate. Perhaps the carnivalesque is akin to the 'unfinished project' of modernity outlined by Habermas?

Or perhaps it bears relevance for the post modern crisis of cultural authority, master narratives and their representations? ... or deconstruction of them? An issue close to the heart of Craig Owens.

Perhaps the carnivalesque yields significance for the critique of producing meaning? The quest for liberation from the tyranny of the signified or is it from the tyranny of the signifier? The quest for meaning which is ambivalent and non authoritarian, and which is produced through a dialectic play between the viewer and the art work.

Perhaps the carnival mode homes in on the high culture/low culture debate? The voicing of non hegemonic systems of values by feminists and others.

In current visual art practice, an eclecticism of devices are employed. Juxtaposition of disparate or incongruent images can be seen widespread, (including notables like

Salle and Longo). Appropriation, masquerading and mimicking of various styles and genres from various cultures is also prolific. An Australian exponent of this tactic is (for instance) Imants Tillers. Inversion of normative roles and codes is even evident in art shown in Hobart, for instance Geoff Parr and Cernak. Perhaps these visual devices are akin to the strategies of carnival? And perhaps, it is not so strange that Megan Cronly rates 'carnival' among the terms with which one must 'come to terms' in order to interpret our world - which she describes as a "world of confusion" (p.232).

For Cronly in the post modern world 'the new' and 'avant garde' have become 'normality' and everything no longer makes sense. It seems somewhat ironic and bizarre that she suggests/jests:

"Perhaps [it is] because we have lost that ritual [of reversal] in the 20th century [that] the medieval carnival appeals to post modernists".

Anyway as Cronly quips

"Parties don't rate highly as a comparison". (p.233).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARTHUR, Kateryna, "Bakhtin, Kristeva and Carnival", Art and Text, Spring 1983, pp.48-53.

BABCOCK, Barbara A. "Arrange Me Into Disorder: Fragments and Reflections on Ritual Clowning", Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle - Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance, ed. John J. MacAloon, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia 1984.

BAKHTIN, Mikhail, Rabelais and His World, translated by Helene Iswolsky, Indiana Uni Press, Bloomington 1984 (1st published 1965 Moscow).

CRONLY, Megan, "The A-Z of Postmodernism, or How many post modernists does it take to change a light bulb?" Follow Me, Vol.198, pp.232-235.

DA MATTA, Roberto, "Carnival in Multiple Planes", Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, op. cit., pp.208-240.

ECO, Umberto, "The Frames of Comic 'Freedom'", Carnival - Approaches to Semiotics 64, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Mouton Publishers, New York, 1984.

EDIZIONI STORTI VENEZIA 1985, Carnival in Venice, English Edition.

FOUCAULT, Michel, Madness and Civilization - A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, transl. Richard Howard, Travistock Publications, 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1:, An Introduction, transl. Robert Hurley, Allen Lane, 1978.

FRAZER, Sir James George, The Golden Bough - A Study in Magic and Religion, abridged edition, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., St. Martins St., London, 1923.

FRYE, Northrop, Anatomy of Criticism - Four Essays, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton Uni Press, 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Myth of Deliverance - reflections on Shakespeare's problem comedies, Uni Toronto Press, 1983.

HALPIN, Marjorie, "The Mask of Tradition", The Power of Symbols - Mask and Masquerade in the Americas, Ch. 17, pp.219-226, ed. N. Ross Crumine & Marjorie Halpin, Uni British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1983.

HORNE, Rob, "Gorillas, Red Indians and the traditions of the dead generations - on thinking in the past", Paper Burns 4. October 1985, pp.30-35.

IVANOV, V.V., "The semiotic theory of carnival as the inversion of bipolar opposites", Carnival, op. cit. pp.11-35, transl. R. Reeder & J. Rostinsky, (1st Publ. 1977).

JAMESON, Fredric, The Political Unconscious - Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, Cornell Uni Press, 1981.

KRISTEVA, Julia, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", Desire in Language - A semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, Ch.3, pp.64-91, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, transl. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine & Leon S. Roudiez, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980.

LADURIE, Emmanuel Le Roy, Carnival in Romans - A People's Uprising at Romans 1579-1580, transl. Mary Feeney, Penguin Books, 1979.

LOMMEL, Andreas, Masks, Their Meaning and Function, transl. Nadia Fowler, Paul Elek Books Ltd. 1970, transl. 1972.

MAKARIUS, Laura, "The Mask and the Violation of Taboo", The Power of Symbols, Ch.15, op. cit., pp.191-203.

ORLOFF, Alexander, Carnival - Myth and Cult, Perlinger 1981 (1st publ. in German 1980).

OTTOMAN, Klaus, "Art and Masquerade", Art and Text - Masques, No.19, October-December 1985, pp.46-55.

RUSSELL, Bertrand, History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1961.

TURNER, Victor, From Ritual to Theatre, The Human Seriousness of Play, Performing Arts Journal Publications, New York, 1982: especially Ch.1, pp.20-60, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual - An Essay in Comparative Symbolology".

\_\_\_\_\_, "Liminality and the Performance Genres", Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, op. cit., pp.19-41.

#### BACKGROUND READING AND REFERENCES

BERGERON, David M., English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642, Edward Arnold Publishers, London, 1971.

BULLOCK, Alan and WOODINGS, R.B. ed, The Fontana Biographical Companion to Modern Thought, Fontana Paperbacks, 1983.

DAVIS, Natalie Zemon, "Charivari, Honor and Community in Seventeen Century Lyon and Geneva", Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, pp.42-57, op. cit.

DITCHFIELD, P.H., Old English Sports, Pastimes and Customs, republished by E.P. Publishing Ltd., British Book Centre Inc., 1975.

ELAM, Keir, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama, Methuen, London, New York, 1980.

GETTINGS, Fred, The Occult in Art, Rizzoli, New York, 1978.

GIBSON, Ross, My notes taken from his seminar "Place a Taste", 18/3/86 and Thomas Watling", 19/3/86 for MFA program, Uni of Tas, Centre for the Arts.

NICOLL, Allardyce, Stuart Masques and the Renaissance State, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London 1937.

PALMER, Geoffrey and LLOYD, Noel, A Year of Festivals - A Guide to British Calendar Customs, Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd., London 1972.

SORELL, Walter, The Other Face - The Mask in the Arts, The Bobbs Merrill Co. Indianapolis, New York, 1973.

TRAISTER, Barbara Howard, Heavenly Necromancers - The Magician in English Renaissance Drama, Uni. of Missouri Press, Columbia 1984.

WEBBER, Mark; STEPHENS, Christopher and LAUGHLIN, Charler Jr., "Masks: A Re-examination, or Masks? You mean they affect the brain?", The Power of Symbols, Ch.16, op. cit., pp.200-218.



WORK PRACTICE

1985-1986

The work produced in the initial months of the course was very experimental and largely unresolved. By about September 1985, I established a firm direction in respect to both materials and imagery. I abandoned the layering of cutout shapes, drawn or painted onto, in favour of a more laborious process of collaging, and underpainting (with acrylic, then with oil paint) on to large vertical canvases, further enriching the colour and surface by glazing. At times I also combined with use of wax, bitumous paint, oil sticks, tissue paper and tracing paper coated with shellac. I continued to work in this manner for the remainder of the course, achieving a luminosity of paint and richness of texture not previously attained, though at the risk of perhaps over defining and deadening certain areas in some instances.

For the most part I did not pre-plan each piece in great detail but developed, expanded and resolved ideas and forms as I went. Because of the slow method of production I tended to work on a number of paintings at one time. This also allowed time for ideas to percolate, distill and feed off each other before completion. At times I made some quick notations and working drawings as well as keeping a scrap book of those images and information that interested me (aside from that which feed into concerns of content, many of the images influenced formal and compositional aspects of my picture making).

The scale of the work was determined in relation to my own dimensions (a comfortable working size) accommodating approximately life to over life size figures which would confront the viewer. The figures in my work represent Others whose sex is hidden (or at least not prescribed) and who are struggling to change, to unmask, to become 'unfinished'.

By the end of 1985 I moved away from my earlier use of the 'witch' image as metaphor for the Other. By the absence/removal of the black conical hats and broomsticks which tend to typify our 20th century image of witches, the stereotype becomes no longer identifiable as 'witch', rendering it as just an/Other (human) being. Similarly the 'scariness', and 'ugliness' in my work became increasingly less caricatured, allowing a more general and open view of mystery, ambiguity and malevolence to be addressed.

I employed masks to suggest role playing, falseness, disguise which dissimulates the person behind from ourselves, forming an image of our 'un-likeness', an image of Otherness. The merging of the 'true' and 'false' face also became less caricatured and subtler as I progressed.

By collaging photocopied segments of life drawings onto the canvas I produced a fractured, distorted, and rearranged human image; juxtaposing this with areas of impasto and flat paint to further disrupt, disguise/mask and disfigure the human image, making it bizarre and abnormal. By early 1986, the drawn areas were to a large extent replaced by photographic images (via photocopies), often from images of my family. The underlying drawing of the figures held together the disparate modes, not unlike the way R.B. Kitaj's pop paintings were underpinned by his draftsmanship.

Continuing to paint over, cover with various images and uncover, scrape back and reveal areas, the surface of each painting itself became a mask, a fragile facade of carefully constructed images. These being framed by a gilt edge - one more painted illusion.

Introduction of elements such as doorways (thresholds), windows and broken mirrors helped to establish the mood and setting of each picture. Consequently the paintings produced in early 1986 proved a more promising avenue than my very early paintings which consisted of 'witch' heads/figures in isolation. At this time I also made more dynamic use of the body image and of paint, and no longer limited the disguise to the face.

The reading for my 2nd seminar paper (which spanned from October 1985 to May 1986) revealed concepts akin to my existing line of thought and which further informed my work. I was particularly interested in Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas of carnival, excess, the grotesque (where what is familiar becomes unfamiliar, even hostile) and the notion of becoming (where the order of things is unfinished, in flux, open to change).

Familiar architectural features (of Hobart) arches, wrought iron fences and even trees became unfamiliar when removed from their own context and recombined or juxtaposed with other painted images (I have also appropriated photos of Romanesque buildings) - creating make-believe settings, distinct from ordinary reality. The architecture (- these man-made structures) also became formal devices which not only indicated spacial depth but also allowed fragmentation and truncation of the body; concealed in exact merging of limbs with torso and in some instances causing the ownership of arms and legs to be ambiguous.

In the most recent paintings I have tried to emphasise the environment surrounding each figure. Elements such as wrought iron fences become spear-like, prodding and menacing the person. In other paintings, shadowy silhouettes and anonymous shapes jutt in from behind doors and from the edges etc.; alluding to the possibility

of off-frame presences and action, prompting speculation about the cause of each figures' strangeness.

The eyes in each work play a crucial part (but constitutes a potential pitfall of paying too much attention to painting the face, at the expense of the surrounding areas). The frontal gaze of the figures fixes the viewers in place, and provides the point of penetration of the surface. And perhaps a point of identification. I used photographic eyes and other facial features semi-concealed in the paint-work to provoke a tension between 'sameness' and 'otherness'. The photographic signifies the 'truthful', the 'real', the 'believable' while the gestural, expressive paint represents artifice, illusion and subjectivity. I later extended this principle by collaging photographic elements into the background, so that there we also find a quality of reality in what we think of as subjective illusion.

The viewers role is influential in constructing (in a way conjuring up) the meaning. S/he is left to reconcile the ambiguities and incongruities of the images, the figures and their surrounding, between the painted, the photographic and the drawn. A number of readings are possible within the confines of the given relationship - undoubtedly these will be subject to the spectators previous/preconceived experiences and expectations.

At the moment I am considering hanging the paintings in a confined space (or series of rooms) - the final arrangement will largely depend on the logistics of the gallery. However I wish the works to be confronting and also wish to determine the sequence that they shall be seen (roughly chronological).

In two paintings I have used two and four panels as a device to elaborate the setting for the figure/s. There are other paintings whilst similar in setting and sympathetic to each other, do not form dyptyches; they are autonomous images.

The series of paintings is collectively titled Imposition and Disposition. None have individual titles barring the last painting, The Carnival. I have done this because I feel that the remainder of paintings are consistent in content whereas The Carnival signifies a slight shift in emphasis.

The Carnival - (a painting in four parts) - is the last completed. Here, the figures are not alienated, they have become less agitated, more relaxed about their position, more festive and capable of laughter. In some ways the scene is reminiscent of a Matisse; but harmony and order give way to chaos, the patterns and structures are fractured and are becoming disorganised and incomplete. Floor tiles, the architecture is breaking up, columns become palm trees. Things are in flux, perhaps everything can change? This painting does demonstrate a shift in emphasis from the rest and I believe opens the way for future work.

## NOTES

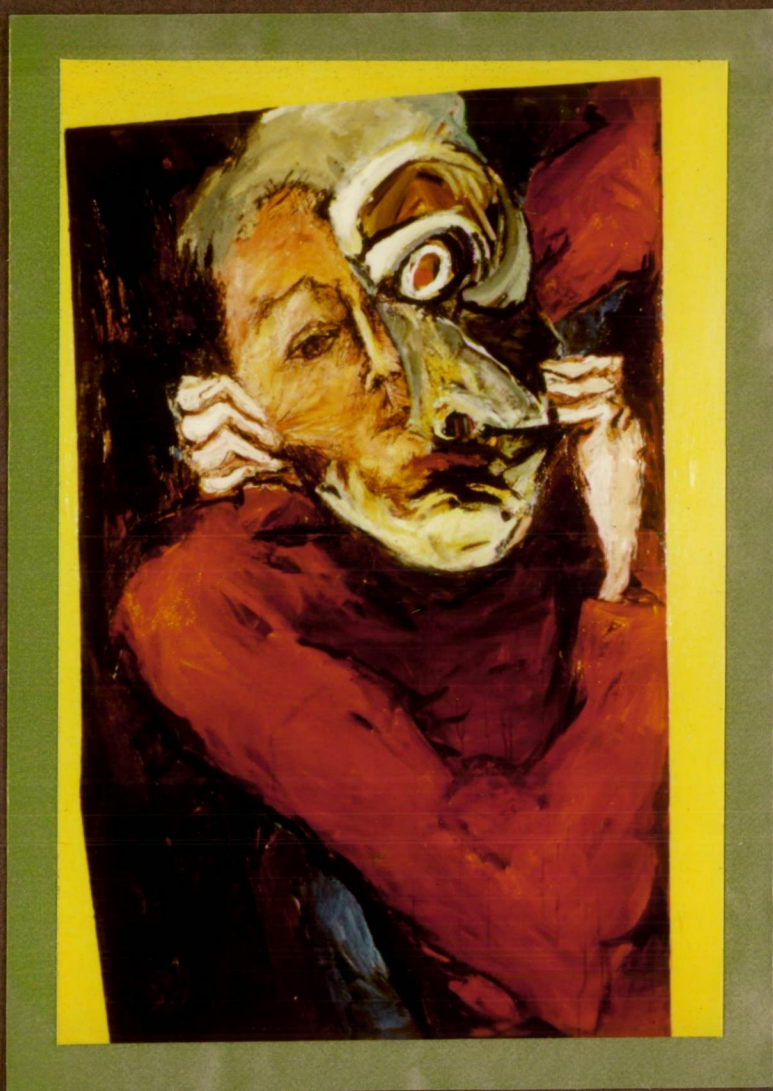


THE WORK



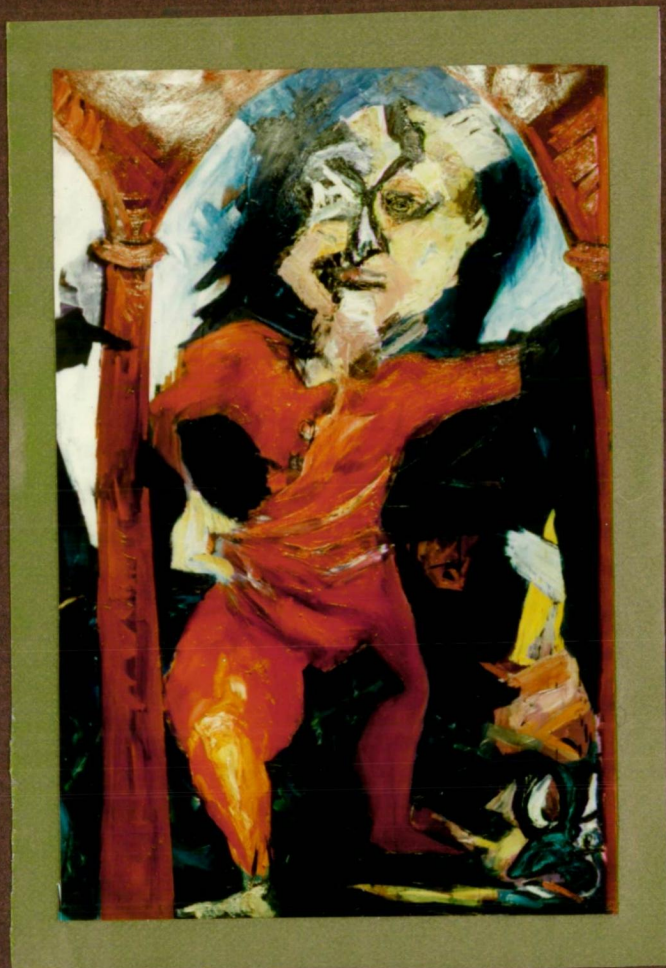
PAINTING 1985,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 172 x 114 cm





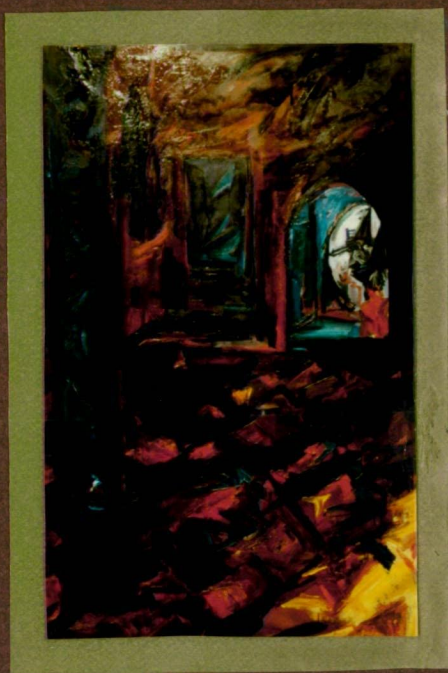
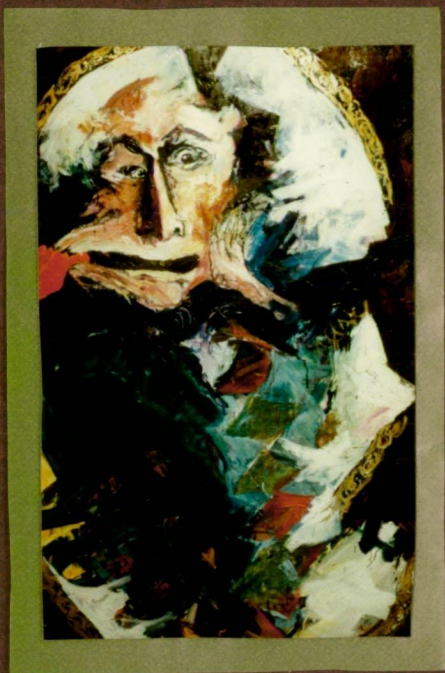
PAINTING 1985,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 166 x 118 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 189 x 130 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas  
2 panels 188 x 128 cm





PAITNTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 118 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 118 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 118 cm





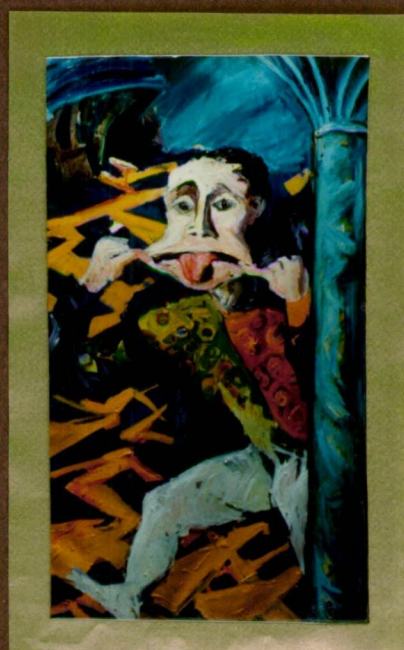
PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 118 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 120 cm





THE CARNIVAL 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas  
4 panels 208 x 124 cm



ADDDITIONAL WORKS



PAINTING 1985,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 152 x 106 cm





PAINTING 1985,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 173 x 106 cm





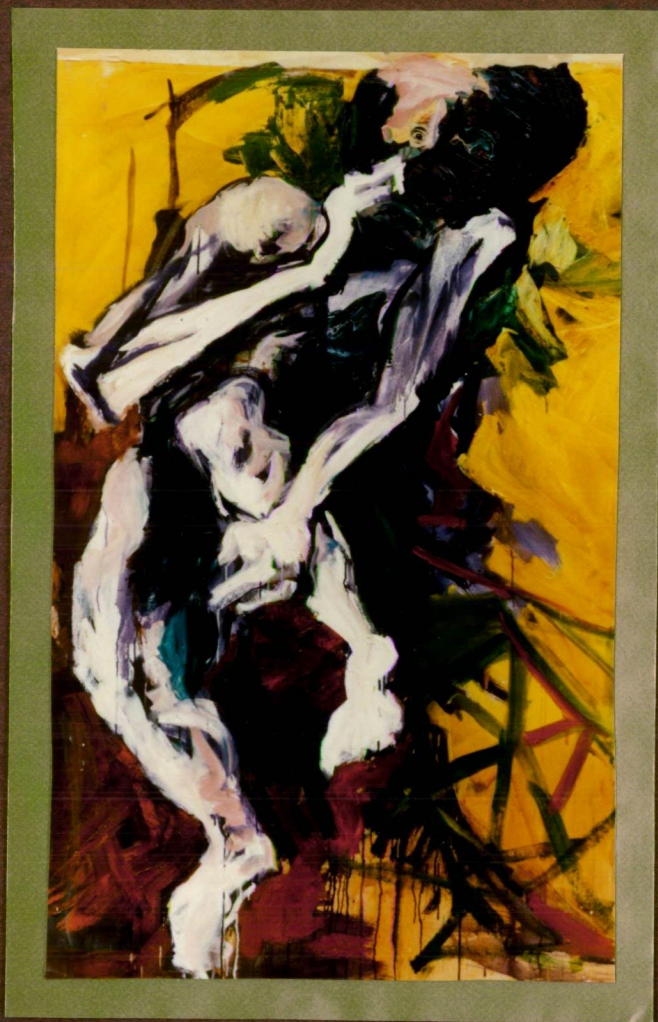
PAINTING 1985  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 170 x 92 cm





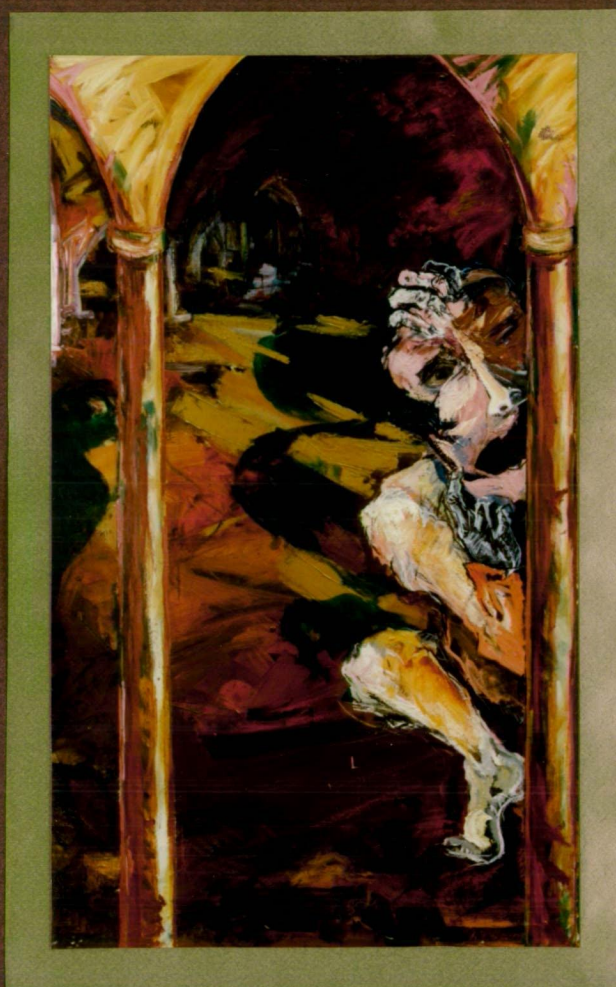
PAINTING 1985-6,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
Mixed media on canvas 181 x 264 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 125 cm





PAINTING 1986,  
IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION series  
mixed media on canvas 190 x 118 cm



# IMPOSITION and DISPOSITION

M. F. A. Submission

## PAINTINGS

by Anne Bennett

"We brandish the threat of the monstrous so as to reinforce the ideology of good and evil, of things that are permitted and prohibited."

[Michel Foucault 1971].

We make-believe in order to suit ourselves, to assuage our own superstitions and fears, to protect our investments in meaning. When we cannot frame our judgements in terms of good and evil, we speak of normal and abnormal.

But, as Nietzsche has shown us, it is not so much that we fear others because they are evil or abnormal; rather they become this because they are Other - alien, different, strange, unfamiliar to us.

## List of Works

### IMPOSITION AND DISPOSITION SERIES

1. PAINTING 1985,  
acrylic, oil and collage on canvas  
172 x 114 cm
2. PAINTING 1985,  
acrylic, oil and collage on canvas  
166 x 118 cm
3. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
190 x 118 cm
4. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
190 x 118 cm
5. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
190 x 120 cm
6. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
190 x 118 cm
7. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
190 x 118 cm
8. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil and collage on canvas  
2 panels 188 x 128 cm
9. PAINTING 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
189 x 130 cm
10. THE CARNIVAL 1986,  
acrylic, oil, bitumen and collage  
on canvas  
4 panels 208 x 124 cm

(all measurements include gold borders)

